



Beyond the Fascist Century

Essays in Honour of Roger Griffin

Edited by

CONSTANTIN IORDACHI
ARISTOTLE KALLIS

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Fascism at 100 (and a Bit)

Constantin Iordachi and Aristotle Kallis

In February 1928, the founder and president of the Fascist Institute of Culture of Milan (*Istituto Fascista di Cultura*) Dino Alfieri proposed to the PNF a retrospective exhibition to mark the tenth anniversary (*Decennale*) of Fascism. His proposal for an ‘Exhibition of Fascism’ (*Mostra del Fascismo*), approved by Mussolini, concerned an event that chronicled the events from the outbreak of World War I through the post-war crisis to the eventual ‘victory’ of Fascism and the forging of the Fascist state. Yet Alfieri’s choice of location for the exhibition (the Castello Sforzesco in Milan) and preferred date (1929) divulged his intention to refract the historical narrative through the lens of Fascism’s trajectory from agitation to power. Milan, as he put it, was the ‘cradle of Fascism’ and the source of the ‘spiritual renaissance of the Italian nation’. As for the anniversary occasion, Alfieri considered the small meeting that took place at the Piazza San

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Sepolcro in central Milan on the morning of 23 March 1919 as the ‘combative dawn’ of the movement, setting in motion a chain of events that culminated in the 1922 March on Rome.¹

The exhibition eventually took place—but not in the form, place or time that Alfieri had envisaged in 1928. The Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista was hosted in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni of Rome and opened its doors in 1932, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the March and not of the founding of the *Fasci di Combattimento* at Piazza San Sepolcro.² In the process, it also changed name, mutating into a *Mostra della Decennale* or the more widely used *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista*—a shift that underlined the sense of revolutionary rupture that came with the seizure of power.³ And yet the 1919 gathering very soon gained mythological status in the historical imaginaries of Fascism, as a gesture of audacious defiance and a rallying cry that was about to grow louder and stronger in the years to follow. To be known as someone who had attended the 1919 meeting bestowed the coveted honour of ‘fascist of the first hour’ (*fascista della prima ora*). Mussolini presented the meeting as the symbolic moment when a host of dissident nationalist groups—those who agitated in favour of *intervento* in 1914–1915, the Arditi, the legionaries, the national syndicalists, the Futurists—joined forces to launch fascism *avant la lettre*.

A century later, the conventional association of the San Sepolcro gathering with the idea of ‘birth’ of f(F)ascism has persisted in historical accounts and analyses.⁴ To be sure, the event has been dissected and scaled down in significance. It barely registered on the national press at the time, with the exception of Mussolini’s *Popolo d’Italia* and some staunchly nationalist journals.⁵ Renzo De Felice described the meeting as

[less] a real congress constituting a new political movement [than] a gathering of politically related people who vowed on that occasion to make their relations more stable and in practice agreed on a negative program, very loosely oriented ... towards a “new order” that even they did not know yet how to figure out.⁶

This was no turning point in the fortunes of what became known as the Fascist movement either. The year that followed provided a harsh reality check for Mussolini and his hopeful followers in electoral terms.⁷ Meanwhile many of the headline radical ideological pronouncements of the programme that Mussolini had announced in March 1919 were soon to

be abandoned or diluted beyond recognition.⁸ No matter how Alfieri wished to present the history of Fascism in 1928, there was obvious no political path dependency from San Sepolcro to the March on Rome.

In his first major published work *The Nature of Fascism* (1991), Roger Griffin came to a similar conclusion about the significance of the March 1919 gathering that launched the *Fasci di Combattimento*.⁹ When he revisited the event in his later work, however, he conferred fresh intellectual significance to it. In *Modernism and Fascism* (2007), he argued that it was

intended as the first step to perpetuating the revolutionary momentum attributed by modernist nationalists to the war from the very beginning. The idea was to launch not a political party but what we have seen cultural anthropologists describe as an ‘anti-structure’, the embryo of the new *communitas*. ... [Mussolini] intended the *Fasci* to form the cells of revolutionary national consciousness that were the first stage towards realizing his vision of the ‘trenchocracy’, a new elite infused with modernist resolve to inaugurate a new world, led not by a politician but by a ‘healer’ who would ‘build the house again and start time anew’.¹⁰

In this respect, the San Sepolcro meeting mattered enormously for the history of f(F)ascism—not as a stepping stone to political success or as a ‘disjunctive moment’.¹¹ Such moments tend to make more sense retrospectively, only once and if the extreme, dissident forces that they shaped and unleashed have gathered momentum through both agency and contingency. Disjunctions sustain mythologies of birth and rebirth, even as their direction or destination remains fuzzy, uncertain and rooted in a mirage of intoxicating collective agency that lies ahead.¹² In March 1919, Mussolini launched a daring bid to re-unite the disparate dissident nationalist forces of the *intervento* into a new protean revolutionary project that he—rather than the radical nationalists of the Italian Nationalist Association or Gabriele D’Annunzio—hoped to lead. The myth of rebirth—of the ‘new blood that would regenerate’ the nation and the state¹³—was to prove f(F)ascism’s mighty mobilising premise of making history, endowing it with ‘extraordinary affective and destructive power’.¹⁴

AIMING FOR THE SKY: THE NATURE OF FASCISM (1991)

This volume aims at exploring the current state and prospects of fascism studies, a hundred years from its birth, using as a vantage point Roger Griffin's work on the topic and the numerous debates, additions and reformulations it stirred in the scholarly community. Born in 1948 and educated at Oxford University (Ph.D. in 1990), Roger Griffin is currently an Emeritus Professor in Modern History in the School of History, Philosophy and Culture at Oxford Brookes University. Griffin's research and teaching career on fascism has spanned over three decades. He has published four major books on fascism (*The Nature of Fascism*, 1991; *A Fascist Century*, 2008), modernism (*Modernism and Fascism*, 2007) and terrorism (*Terrorist's Creed: Fanatical Violence and the Human Need for Meaning*, 2012); edited major collections of articles on fascism (*International Fascism: Theories, Causes, and the New Consensus*, 1998; *Fascism, Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right*, 2014), two anthologies of primary and secondary sources (*Fascism*, 1995; *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, 2003), two concise introductions into fascism studies (*Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies*, 2018; *Fascism: A Quick Immersion*, 2020), and over 120 chapters and articles on fascism, extremism, religious politics, political religion, terrorism, radicalisation, populism, political modernism, identity, and the psychology of fanaticism.

Griffin made his entry into fascism studies in the early 1990s, at a time when a new wave of scholarship had already started engaging with fascism as an intellectually distinct and complex phenomenon. Back in 1979, Gilbert Allardyce's call to 'de-model, de-ideologize, de-mystify and, above all, de-escalate' the concept of 'fascism'¹⁵ had provided a timely corrective to the over-extension and distortion of the term. Ever since it appeared in the political vocabulary of the 1920s, believers and foes alike had displayed an inclination to read something deeper, bigger, generic, and trans-/international in 'fascism'. Allardyce likened such an over-extension 'without conceptual boundaries' to the 'logic of a cancer cell'; he also doubted that even the use of more rigorous criteria of analysis could give the concept any heuristic utility whatsoever. For him, 'fascism' had no meaning outside interwar Italy and it could thus never be a generic concept; what is more, it possessed no distinct ideology either. 'Like the search for the black cat in a dark room', he argued, seeking a generic

fascism was an ‘act of faith ... pursued by reason’ as it ‘presumes that there is something to be found in the dark void’.¹⁶ Allardyce was not the first to evince this critique. A decade earlier, writing about the abuse of the term in the context of the persisting ‘social fascist’ discourse, Theodore Draper had called it a case of ‘extreme divorce between ideology and reality’.¹⁷ At around the same time, Stuart Woolf had prefaced a comparative study of ‘fascisms’ in Europe with a call to ‘ban’ the term as ‘it has been so misused that it has lost its original meaning’.¹⁸

What original meaning though? In a brief reply appended to Allardyce’s article, Stanley Payne argued that ‘historical understanding requires us to identify certain common features or qualities of new forces within a given period, if only to recognize and clarify their differences and uniqueness’. The need for a usable ‘fascist [definitional] minimum’ depended on one’s perspective on the half-empty/half-full conundrum. Payne suggested an alternative reading of what Allardyce objected to, beginning with the observation that a series of radical nationalist movements with revolutionary aims that were at one and the same time anti-Marxian, anti-liberal, and anticonservative appeared in Europe between the world wars. Do they merit recognition as a category in some cautiously delimited and pluralistic schema for purposes of political analysis and classification? Or is it more accurate and satisfactory to emphasise their differences and perforce subsume them into some broader category of radical or revolutionary mass movements? This is a most difficult question of historical-political taxonomy; and, though the radically particularistic historian-interested only in the nominalist approach—may respond that for him the question does not apply, those interested in systematic, comparative analysis cannot elude it.¹⁹

In his reply to Allardyce’s article, Ernst Nolte reached a similar conclusion that defended the methodological validity of his own approach to the analysis of fascism since the 1960s²⁰: some form of generic concept of ‘fascism’ can be useful to historians by ‘differentiating among the forms to arrive at a historical description that is as comprehensive as possible’.²¹ Payne went on to give concrete shape to his typology of ‘fascism’—a device of limited scope ‘for purposes of comparative analysis’ as he pointed out—based on a distinction between negations, goals, and style.²² Other scholars tended to the same goal of ‘taking fascism seriously’ and treating it as some form of distinct generic phenomenon. They started from different assumptions and came to divergent conclusions about the origins, definition, and scope of ‘fascism’; but they more or less

explicitly rejected Woolf's or Allardyce's calls to abandon the concept. Instead, they opted for more sophisticated definitional and taxonomical perspectives that promised to give 'fascism' substance without either over-extending or over-specifying it as a tool of generic analysis.

THE CONTROVERSY AROUND THE 'NEW CONSENSUS'

In his recent sweeping and insightful overview of the historiography of fascism, David Roberts identified 1991 as the starting point of a new wave of scholarship on generic fascism.²³ The publication of *The Nature of Fascism* struck a chord not only in its fresh conceptual approach but also because of its clarity and succinctness. Griffin's definition of fascism as 'a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism'²⁴ did not purport to offer a refined taxonomy. Instead, it focused on the need to distil what was novel and distinct about fascism's multiple historical instances to the sort of ideological 'minimum' that Ernst Nolte had coined and Payne had defended in the 1970s. He sought to deduce a Weberian 'ideal type' for fascism with a more or less stable 'core' of critical 'ineliminable components' that Michael Freeden had proposed as the basis of his sophisticated approach to ideologies.²⁵ Griffin's approach gained adherents as well as critics at breakneck speed. Many historians, including some of those who adopted a critical stance at the time or later, conceded that it marked a compelling interpretation; some were prepared to describe it as a turning point in the historiography of fascism, encouraging further approaches that took fascism more seriously than ever; others criticised it for essentialism and a stifling adherence to a taxonomical reasoning that reduced the scope for making broader comparisons and analysing intersections.²⁶ But it was Griffin's subsequent claim, prefacing his second book-length publication *International Fascism*, that a 'new consensus' had finally emerged in the fray of fascism studies around a definition of the fascist ideological *minimum* centred on rebirth that proved the most controversial.²⁷ The ensuing polemic raged on for some time, leaving behind it a fair amount of supporting and dissenting literature.²⁸ Genuine methodological and interpretive differences escalated into polarities, sometimes as much personal as academic, overshadowing the more measured voices that attempted to take stock of the implications.²⁹ The 'culturalist' turn in fascism studies that Griffin's approach came to epitomise attracted some of the most scathing critiques, both for its potential neglect of other

dimensions of fascism (e.g. power or economy) and for its suspected moral relativism that could undermine historical understanding.³⁰

Consensus or not, Griffin's interpretation of fascism provided a definitional heuristic *lingua franca* for an ever-expanding number of scholars engaging one way or another with the subject.³¹ Even many of those who were sceptical about the approach or disagreed with it on methodological grounds, still used it as a point of reference, if only to suggest alternative interpretive perspectives.³² The wide-ranging exchange of views hosted by the journal *Erwägen, Wissen, Ethik* in 2004 brought together diverse geographic/national, epistemological, and generational constituencies working on fascism in a dialogue that exposed both the reach of Griffin's interpretation and its contentious, even divisive nature. The discussion focused on a lengthy main article, in which Griffin restated his interpretation, repeated the earlier claim of an emergent 'consensus', revisited the always contentious place of National Socialism in the universe of generic fascism, reflected on the divergent paths between Anglo-Saxon and German scholarship, and articulated how his definitional scheme could provide fresh insights about the ongoing relevance of 'fascism' in the 'post-fascist' epoch. The volume, supplemented by a second round of comments by most contributors and a lengthy response by Griffin, produced mixed results. It is doubtful that it 'substantially moved [the debate] forward' or that its call for a 'vast collaborative project ... to combat the constant and ever-changing assaults on society by ideologically articulated superstition, myths, and prejudice' was heeded. The tone of some of the exchanges (e.g. by Ernst Nolte or A James Gregor) was hostile, uncompromising, and personal. Most contributors stated their disagreements cogently but, courtesy to the author of the main article aside, appeared unwilling to move. In this sense, the 2004 volume marked the peak of the debate on the 'new consensus' and mapped productively the expanding terrains of fascism studies in their diversity and interpretive nuance—but it did little to generate more of a consensus about the 'new consensus'. Whether this was even Griffin's or the journal's intention in the first place when they embarked on the debate is a moot point.³³ In his response to the first round of the exchange, he reiterated that by consensus he meant the growing convergence of independent-minded scholars on the basis of an increasingly shared—but far from identical—analytical and definitional language. This was a language that could be invoked—in broad agreement or otherwise with his own idiosyncratic approach—to *talk* about 'fascism' without having to re-invent the

conceptual wheel every time. This more nuanced assertion was lost in the polemic headlines of the exchange, just like it had done in all its earlier iterations since 1998.

Griffin himself played a key role in extending the reach of his analytical schemes, publishing numerous works on topics ranging from Fascist culture, the relations between fascism and clericalism, political religion, and fascist temporalities, to the study of the post-war radical right.³⁴ A curated selection of this wide-ranging work came together in a volume under the title *A Fascist Century* in 2008. The title made deliberate reference to Mussolini's prophesy that the twentieth century was destined to become 'a Fascist century', eclipsing in historical significance the other major ideologies of liberalism and socialism that had dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively. In putting together the anthology of shorter pieces that Griffin had produced in the wake of *The Nature of Fascism*, the volume performed two tasks. First, it took stock of the extraordinary influence of Griffin's work on fascism as a catalyst for the 'maturation of a nascent discipline', namely fascism studies. Second, it offered a sweeping view of the multidimensionality, ongoing refinement, and expansiveness of his understanding of 'fascism' that had rendered his 1991 monograph so influential and provocative. Apart from gathering a series of articles and essays from various sources in a single volume, *A Fascist Century* offered an unexpected perk—a candid concluding interview with Griffin, in which well-known controversial aspects of his work were revisited in a less charged setting and the diverse aspects of his prolific work were more affectively contextualised.³⁵

EXPANDING THE HORIZONS

By the time the collection appeared, Griffin had published *Modernism and Fascism*. This book was at the same time a trademark Griffinite piece of intellectually expansive scholarship and a departure. Fascism was now defined as 'a revolutionary species of political modernism whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history ... by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality ... based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation'. The notably longer 'discursive definition' culminated in a more familiar revised statement of his earlier (and shorter) definition of fascism as 'a form of programmatic modernism that seeks to conquer political power in order to realize

a totalizing vision of national or ethnic rebirth'.³⁶ The familiar ingredients that had made Griffin's approach gain traction since the 1990s were still there, refracted through his subsequent appreciation of the power of myth, of Emilio Gentile's political religion, and of the 'revolutionary experience of standing on the edge of history'. But this was also a heuristic perspective that, in his own words, sought to 'integrate more and more fully within non-fascist aspects of modern history, ... with a whole number of inter-related phenomena relating to modernity and modernism'.³⁷ The understanding of fascism as a revolutionary project of political modernism transformed the 'extreme syncretism, nebulousness, and contradictoriness characteristic of individual fascist ideologies which appeared to some historians as a 'ragbag' or 'hotchpotch' of ideas' from an interpretive conundrum into a central plank of what made fascism ideologically distinct and underpinned its affective power. In essence, the apparent contradiction between a fascism that 'resolutely affirm[ed] "the temporality of the new"' and a fascism that looked back in order to draw on 'the values of an idealized, largely *invented*, national past to regenerate the future' was reappraised and demystified. The protean flux of fascism encompassed both facets as complementary strategies of forging a new alternative modernity with the regenerated nation at its heart.³⁸

Unashamedly 'culturalist' in its perspective, *Modernism and Fascism* even reached further than any of Griffin's previous books. In addition to his fluency in intellectual history, his 2007 monograph delved effortlessly into art and architecture, psychology and anthropology, cult and technology. In the final pages of one of his appendices, Griffin expressed the hope that his approach, while not discovering 'buried truths or triumphantly resolv[ing] issues that have baffled other experts', could open up 'new vistas of comprehension ... into the mythopoeic mechanisms capable of turning the disorienting *experience* of modernity into a source of fanaticism both religious and secular'.³⁹ There was an unmistakable cue here to his subsequent monograph *Terrorist's Creed*—a foray into the origins and drivers of extremist, fanatical violence and thus a notable departure from his earlier focus on fascism.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, *Modernism and Fascism* marked the beginning of a more eclectic intellectual journey into diverse histories of the last hundred years, ranging from the architectural production of fascist and right-wing dictatorships to an interest in Futurism to the study of modern-day extremism and terrorist impulses.

Griffin had never shied away from defending the intellectual and methodological validity of the approach to fascism that he had pioneered with his first monograph and subsequently refined and updated to reflect his own intellectual trajectory. He was equally intent, however, on not simply recycling his ‘one good idea of about 20 years ago’ but on extending it to new areas of enquiry. His prolific record of research in the past decade or so provides the strongest proof that, no matter how contentious among scholars of fascism studies, Griffin’s perspective was useful and stimulating well beyond its field of knowledge. For his part, Griffin showed a higher degree of openness to creative adaptations and extensions of his interpretive scheme. His re-engagement with para-fascism and authoritarian dictatorships of the interwar period divulged his growing willingness to ‘de-centre’ fascism (a critique of the custom identification of Italy and Germany as exemplary historical cases) and to re-locate these otherwise difficult to categorise phenomena within the expanding and polymorphic sphere of fascism studies and political modernism. At the same time, his ongoing reflection on post-war and contemporary radical right-wing and populist phenomena underlined how his conception of ‘fascism’ was not confined to the Noltean ‘epoch’ of the interwar years but extended over a ‘long’ century of revolutionary projects of the right.

Less well-known than his earlier conceptual innovations but highly influential has been his idea of ‘rooted modernism’. Although the trope of ‘rootedness’ pervaded his earlier work on modernism, it graduated into a standalone conceptual category long after the publication of *Modernism and Fascism*. In a 2016 article, he defined the term succinctly as the ‘fascist bid to carry out the total renewal of [the nation] in the spirit of a heroic past’.⁴¹ Two years later, the same term had grown in stature to feature in another article’s title and received a more granular definition as an aesthetic language that was unmistakably modern ... but whose aesthetic design deliberately evokes or implies a ‘usable past’, real or mythic’. He then added the following clarification about the term’s significance:

It is this hybrid of functional modernity with elements of conservatism and tradition (and not necessarily the nation’s ‘real’ history) that embodies the ethos of a regime that sees itself as pioneering a new society and opening

up a new future for its people, while simultaneously maintaining its continuity with, and rootedness in, the unique, ‘eternal’ genius of the nation as manifested in its cultural past.⁴²

‘Rooted modernism’ was in many ways another expression of the familiar ‘protean’ trope that had always been central to Griffin’s interpretation of fascism as palingenetic ultra-nationalism.⁴³ Understanding fascism as a syncretist, polyvalent, and supremely adaptable force underpinned his conceptual balancing act of reading into it both cultic and rational, traditional and futural impulses. In a similar fashion, the motto of ‘rooted modernism’ allowed him to claim convincingly that the deliberate fusion and simultaneity of past and future conferred upon the quest for radical rebirth a sense of intimate, familiar rootedness in its particular context. Going against the grain of deprecating the hybrid stripped-down classicism of Piacentini’s or Speer’s official regime architecture as cultural regression, Griffin’s ‘rooted modernism’ rehabilitated them as legitimate, even eloquent expressions of a modernism with profound contextual resonance.

THE STUDY OF FASCISM AS AN ONGOING ‘COLLABORATIVE PROJECT’

The last observation holds true of Griffin’s lifelong approach to historical scholarship. An unapologetic aficionado of the ‘bigger picture’, he never shied way from going against the historiographical stream. Animated by a critical, supremely polemicist spirit, Griffin has been a driving force in the field, never missing an academic debate over cutting-edge research approaches and perspectives on fascism. A gifted scholar and a maverick, he did arguably more than anyone to transform fascism studies from a restricted, fragmented, and polarised specialisation into a field of international, polyvalent, and diachronic import. His conviction that only through methodological ‘empathy’—an analytical approach premised on collapsing the distance from his historical subject by straying into the ‘forbidden territories of psychology and anthropology’ and ‘taking seriously the worldview and psychology of [fascist] actors’⁴⁴—could fascism’s deeper impulses and attraction become excavated often exposed him to criticisms of moral relativism.⁴⁵ His penchant for thinking across borders and boundaries, along generic and universal lines, scales of minimum and maximum prompted criticisms of over-simplification and essentialism. Still

Griffin was always gifted with an eye for connections and convergence rather than dichotomies or particularism. His often derided ‘missionary’ zeal⁴⁶ belied an impatience with an empirical approach devoid of intellectual curiosity and sweeping imagination. If his case for ‘consensus’ in the late 1990s was couched in terms that proved controversial, divisive, and in the end counter-productive,⁴⁷ his underpinning motive was more akin to a call for unity-in-diversity. The ethical stance of methodological empathy enabled Griffin to take seriously the perspective and experiences of others—be they historical actors or colleagues in the field—and fuelled his cross-cultural encounters and exchanges, while informing his self-reflection and recognition of limitations. An avid traveller, Griffin took part in countless academic events, providing valuable insights and encouragement to starters in the field. In addition to being a prolific writer, Griffin also served as an inspiring and generous mentor of a new generation of researchers working on fascism in various countries situated in Western as well as Eastern Europe, from England, Spain and Portugal to the Czech Republic, Romania and Ukraine, to name but a few.

Griffin was explicit that ‘there was nothing new or original about the definitional components at the heart of the consensus’. He was effusive in his praise of the work of scholars who had shaped his understanding of fascism—the under-appreciated Mosse, Payne, Sternhell, as well as Gentile and Eatwell.⁴⁸ In his own words, a key motive behind his ‘programmatic’ articles was his desire to accelerate the formation of a community of scholars in the humanities who could see themselves as ‘involved in a vast collaborative project’ based on ‘conciliation and synergy’ instead of taking ‘refuge in isolated, polarized positions of hostility and disdain for other perspectives’.⁴⁹ His pleas for his version of unity-in-diversity was not received as positively by scholars who had already set out their own analytical stalls in the 1990s as he had hoped for. His attempt to demonstrate mischievously that there may be a divergence between how his staunchest critics were chastising the ‘new consensus’ and how they were actually conceptualising ‘fascism’ in their respective works did not curry much favour either. Away, however, from the imagined frontlines of scholarly historical controversies, a growing number of other scholars continued to ‘annex’ Griffin’s understanding of fascism to their own work and then adapt and translate aspects of it for a wide range of intellectual pursuits. Without great fanfare and away from the jaded public debates about fascism or national histories, they helped clear the path for new perspectives on the multiple histories of ‘generic fascism’. In different ways,

new scholarship on fascism has looked further afield and has displayed more creativity than the pioneers of fascism studies, Griffin included, could imagine earlier. More importantly, it has scaled barricades to trans-disciplinary, comparative,⁵⁰ transnational,⁵¹ and ‘ecumenical’ research on fascism. The earlier *Hysterikerstreit* of fascism studies, as Griffin playfully called it back in 2005,⁵² appears to have subsided, all for the better. Equally importantly, the prevailing larger impulses to overcome national historiographical boundaries and to explore the transnational dimensions of fascism at global level have been institutionalised in two recent collaborative initiatives: the establishment in April 2012 of the Open Access *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, published by Brill and hosted by NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam; and, in 2018, of the *International Association of Comparative Fascist Studies* (ComFas), hosted by the Central European University, Budapest-Vienna. The primary aim of these venues is to provide meeting grounds for comparatively minded scholars from various academic disciplines working on the transnational history of fascism and the radical right. To this end, they plan to stimulate the coordination of teaching and research activities on these topics, potentially leading to synergy in research and cross-national initiatives.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE VOLUME

The volume brings together a plethora of critically minded historians of fascism who engage appreciatively, critically and creatively with Roger Griffin’s work. The deliberately wide-ranging featured work (twelve essays in total) seeks to celebrate Roger Griffin’s overall contribution to ‘fascism studies’ broadly conceived—in conceptual and definitional terms but also in advancing understandings of fascism—that have informed exciting related research agendas in a number of fields and directions brought forward by scholars across the world since the 1980s. The editors have sought to bring together a wide—yet by no means exhaustive or necessarily ‘representative’—sample of such scholars, with as diverse expertises as possible and focusing on an exciting diverse range of topics that reflect their individual expertise, in a volume that both takes stock of Roger’s input and looks forward in terms of current and future research agendas for ‘fascism studies’. Broadly speaking, three ‘generations’ of fascism scholars, coming from a multitude of historiographical schools and traditions, are represented in the list of participating authors, offering

a combination of broad conceptual essays and contributions that are more focused to particular themes and particular geographic/chronological facets of fascism. The contributors have all had various levels of personal engagement with Roger Griffin and his work, as students, colleagues, partners in research project and or debating circles. The essays tackle a sum of key issues in the history of fascism, including its ideology and its relation to religion and totalitarianism, the theory and methodology of comparative fascist studies, the history of para-fascist authoritarianism, and the issue of neo-fascism. Their common aim is to evaluate Griffin's path-breaking contribution to the field and to highlight the impact and implications of his work for its present and future.

The essays are organised in mixed chronological and thematical order. The first part of the volume focuses on historiography of fascism with a focus on contested theoretical and methodological issues, such as palingenesis and totalitarianism (David Roberts), the praxeological approach to fascism (Sven Reichardt), ideational mobilities and para-fascism (Aristotle Kallis), and neo-fascism (Nigel Copsey). The second part advances new perspectives on specific case studies of interwar and post-war/contemporary fascism, from Italy (Emilio Gentile and Fernando Esposito) to East Central Europe (Raul Cârstocea and Jakub Drábik) to Spain (Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío), to Brazil (António Costa Pinto), and finally to the more recent Anglophone cultic neo-Nazi scene (Paul Jackson). The volume concludes with an essay on the comparative and transnational methods in fascist studies (Constantin Iordachi).

In the opening chapter of the collection, David D. Roberts revisits critically Roger Griffin's definition of fascism as 'palingenetic ultranationalism'. While reasserting the usefulness of this concept for understanding fascism, Robert also underlines the paramount importance of the concept of totalitarianism. He argued that a recast notion of totalitarianism around a new mode of collective action' is key to understanding the fascist political experiments in mass politics. In the end, Roberts suggests that totalitarianism and palingenesis are not mutually exclusive but two intertwined and complementary notions and should be employed in tandem in order to illuminate the fascist ideological core.

Sven Reichardt provides another overview of new trends in fascism studies, with a similar focus on the relationship between fascism and totalitarianism. He argues in favour of a praxeological approach to fascism on the counts that it enables scholars to merge microhistorical and macro-historical research perspectives and to illuminate the processes of fascist

radicalisation and the adoption of political violence leading to war and genocide. In the end, Reichardt calls for additional research on the issue of exchanges and interactions among fascist movements and regimes in Europe and beyond it.

Aristotle Kallis engages creatively with Roger Griffin's concept of 'para-fascism' in order to shed light on the intricate relationship between fascism and interwar authoritarianism. Using the half-empty glass analogy, Kallis points out that authoritarian regimes resembled fascism so closely that they should be studied within the context of fascism studies. From this perspective, Kallis urges scholars of fascism to rethink the hybrid authoritarian regimes and to integrate them more firmly into the history of interwar radicalism, in the context of, rather than in opposition to, fascism.

Nigel Copsey embraces Griffin's plea for taking contemporary fascism seriously as a vital and influential political phenomenon and not as a pale reflection or decayed mirror-image of interwar fascism. His essay provides an informative history of the various forms and stages of neo-fascism in post-1943 Europe. To illustrate the metamorphosis suffered by contemporary fascism, Copsey focuses on three novel characteristics that were added to its palingenetic core: de-territorialisation, meta-politicisation, and historical revisionism. Without overestimating the mass character or the political importance of neo-fascism, Copsey points out that fascism remains a major challenge to democracy for the foreseeable future. In line with Griffin, Copsey urges scholars to pay greater attention to the heuristic value of neo-fascism and to trace its toxic influence on contemporary radical-right populism.

In the second part of the volume, Emilio Gentile explores the emergence of Fascism as a political movement in Italy in 1919. He points out that, at its origins, the Fascist political program was neither radical nor revolutionary but an amalgam of progressist demands about the post-war democratisation of society. Gentile identifies the roots of a cleavage between Mussolini, portrayed as a rather conventional leader interested in consolidating his position through negotiation and compromise, and the more radical grass-roots segments of the Combat Leagues, who advocated anti-establishment measures. For Gentile, the 2019 centenary of fascism is a 'false anniversary,' since Fascism of 1919 was qualitatively different from the latter, more radical forms of fascism. Gentile's essay underscores the fact that, as a political phenomenon, interwar Italian Fascism was a

‘work in progress’ and that some of its characteristics shifted as function of the socio-political context of the time.

Raul Cârstocea and Jakub Drábik explore the relevance of Roger Griffin’s definition of ‘generic fascism’ for the study of Fascism in East Central Europe. In line with other works on the topic, Cârstocea focuses on three ways in which Griffin’s concept of palingenesis is relevant for understanding the Romanian Legion of Archangel Michael: the movement’s anti-Semitism, leading to radicalism and violence; the temporalities of palingenesis; and the importance of palingenesis for building affinities with other European fascist movements and regimes. Jakub Drábik explores the history of Czechoslovak fascism from the prism of the ‘new consensus.’ He highlights the benefits of applying Griffin’s methodological approach on generic fascism as a heuristic tool for studying Czech fascism. His main goal is to critically re-evaluate scholarly work on the subject and to reconceptualise the history of Czech fascism by challenging the prevailing view that it was a marginal, stagnant and irrelevant movement.

Building on Roger Griffin’s theoretical perspectives on fascist temporalities and their intricate relationship to modernity, Fernando Esposito reviews a cluster of intertwined concepts that were central to the Fascist political language, namely revolution, the New Man, *bonifica*, and the myth of universal Rome. He pays particular attention to the institutionalisation of the fascist temporality and their vision of a “new age” in the new calendar adopted in 1926/27 and in the excavation of ancient Rome. Esposito argued that the Fascist temporality was based on a paradoxical combination between *Aufbruch*, the destruction of the past, on the one hand, and the myth of rebirth and of a new eternal order, on the other.

Griffin’s definition of fascism has been instrumental in illuminating the history and profile of ‘non-Western’ fascism, as well. Mercedes Peñalba-Sotorrío explores the rise to power of the Falange Española, from a marginal fascist party under the Second Republic to a major party during the Civil War, and a single ruling party from 1937 to 1945. Peñalba-Sotorrío argued that this transformation was enabled by the dynamics of the Civil War but also by direct ideological transfers from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. She points out that, after 1937, the Falange played a pivotal role in the indoctrination of Spanish society and the construction of Franco’s New State. On this basis, she argues that the Falange’s political trajectory should not be easily dismissed as a failed attempt to instate a fascist dictatorship in Spain. In the end, Peñalba-Sotorrío reiterates the

fact that, in order to fully understand the post-liberal departure of the 1930–1940s, it is necessary to situate the Spanish case within a broader European context.

António Costa Pinto also engages with Griffin's concept of para-fascism, exploring its relevance for the institutionalisation of a wide range of dictatorial regimes in interwar Latin America. He points out that the heterogeneous spectrum of authoritarian regimes established in the region during the 'fascist era' met with various degrees of success, from very unstable and poorly institutionalised to more consolidated ones. Costa Pinto focuses, in particular, on The New State established in Brazil by Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945), which he redefines as a paradigmatic case of a para-fascist regime. Costa Pinto provides new insights into the way in which domestic political actors look at institutional models of fascism and corporatism in 1930s Brazil.

Paul Jackson surveys Griffin's perspective on post-war fascism, as well, testing its heuristic usefulness for studying the history of the small but numerous and vivid neo-Nazi networks. He argues that Griffin's conceptual perspective enables scholars to illuminate the rhizomic, de-centred groupuscular neo-Nazi culture and its cultic milieu. Jackson focuses, in particular, on notions of scripted violence, lone actor terrorism, and the cross-border exchanges between British and American groupuscules, such as, mostly notably, the National Action in the UK and Atomwaffen Division in America. In line with Copsey, Jackson concludes that Griffin's theoretical framework on neo-fascism is key to understanding contemporary neo-Nazi groups and their adoption of political violence, often leading to terrorism.

Finally Constantin Iordachi argues that, although fascism studies are inherently comparative, the comparative methods have never had its momentum in the field. Iordachi begins by providing a thorough review of the field, revolving around Griffin's ideal-type definition of generic fascism. He highlights the advantages but also the limitation of the Weberian ideal-type definition of fascism. Taking stock of the new developments in fascism studies in the last decades, Iordachi identifies a new research agenda revolving around comparative and transnational approaches. He argued that new critical-minded interdisciplinary and global studies of fascism should carry the field to a new level of sophistication.

Overall, the range of scholarship presented here is intended as a testament to Griffin's pioneering, inspiring and multifaceted work on fascism.

This volume serves as an illustration of the new relevance of transnationalism, and its momentum in the discipline, also marked by the recent foundation of *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* and the *International Association for Comparative Fascism Studies* (COMFAS) (which Griffin also played a significant role in bringing about, as Consultant Editor, and founding member of its leading committee, respectively).

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 44. Griffin, 'I Am No Longer Human'. In *A Century of Fascism*, 21; see also his explanation in his interview published in the same volume, p. 211.
 45. For example, Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship*, 26–27.
 46. Meuer, Bärbel. 2004. Ernst Nolte oder Max Weber: Braucht die Wissenschaft einen (Gott-)Vater? *Erwägen, Wissen, Ethik* 15, no. 4: 328–30, here 330.
 47. See, for example, Griffin's own admission that his attempt to explain his claim of a 'new consensus' through his main article in the 15(3) issue of *Erwägen, Wissen, Ethik* 'has been rejected by a fairly representative sample of contemporary academics' (Da capo, con meno brio: Towards a More Useful Conceptualization of Generic Fascism. In *Fascism, Past and Present, West and East*, 261).
 48. Griffin, Withstanding the Rush of Time; Griffin, Roger. 2011. Fascism and Culture: A Mosse-Centric Meta-Narrative (or How Fascist Studies Reinvented the Wheel). In *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism*, ed. António Costa Pinto, 85–116. Basingstoke: Palgrave; Griffin, Roger. 2010. 'Consensus? Quel Consensus?' Perspectives pour une meilleure Entente entre spécialistes francophones et anglophones du fascisme, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 4: 53–69, here 58.
 49. Da capo, con meno brio: Towards a More Useful Conceptualization of Generic Fascism. In *Fascism, Past and Present, West and East*, 278.
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PART I

Theoretical Perspectives



CHAPTER 2

Palingenesis and Totalitarianism in Roger Griffin's Interpretation of Fascism

David D. Roberts

THE UNCERTAIN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FASCISM AND TOTALITARIANISM

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to honour Roger Griffin and his indispensable contributions to our understanding of fascism and political extremism. I've been fortunate to have corresponded with him about those topics for almost twenty years. At one point, our correspondence even led us to guest co-edit a special issue of *European Journal of Political Theory*, to be discussed below. We've reviewed each other's books. I've learned immensely from his always engaging, stimulating, and sometimes provocative work. Inevitably, of course, I've disagreed with him on occasion, and as it happened I wrote a series of critiques during the first decade of the century at the behest of various editors.¹ It may have seemed that I was on a mission to "go after" Griffin, but the fact of so many in a short period was entirely coincidental.

However, I also took occasional aim at Griffin in my contribution to a collaborative volume published in 2014, then again in my *Fascist Interactions* of 2016.² But when I disagreed with him, I found it immensely

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useful to figure out why. And my criticisms were always intended as contributions to an ongoing dialogue. Griffin seemed consistently to have understood them in that light as we corresponded. In the spirit of continuing dialogue I offer some further critique in the present essay, but, as always, from within a framework of broader agreement. Like Griffin, I believe in taking fascism seriously, as revolutionary in its own right, as a quest for an alternative modernity. I too seek to listen even to fascists with an initial modicum of empathy and to describe them in terms they themselves would have understood. I too recognise that initial empathy does not preclude but eventually invites evaluation and criticism.³

The relationship between fascism and totalitarianism, long uncertain and controversial, has come up in Griffin's work in instructive but somewhat disparate ways. By fascism he of course has intended his own influential notion, accenting "palingenesis"—connoting quasi-mystical rebirth, not merely radical change—combined with extreme nationalism. He insists on the term *ultranationalism* to distinguish this form from the ordinary nationalism that he plausibly finds compatible with liberal democracy.⁴ The whole business Griffin finds ultimately unrealistic. And because the aspiration is at once quasi-mystical and unrealistic, he consistently characterises its core as "mythic".

Griffin single-handedly brought palingenesis to prominence in fascist studies in the early 1990s, and the notion has remained especially influential.⁵ Even such authorities as Constantin Iordachi and Mary Vincent, who otherwise seem eager for fresh approaches, appear to take palingenesis for granted as the essence of fascism.⁶ Reviewing Griffin's writings I noted three instances in which the relationship between fascism, wound around palingenesis, and totalitarianism is explicitly, though not exclusively, at issue. Especially taken together, they seemed to invite another look at his understanding of that relationship. I recognise that some find the totalitarianism category especially problematic, and I will take certain objections into account as I proceed.

The relationship between palingenetic fascism and totalitarianism also comes up in passing in Griffin's recent book *Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies* (2018) for the Polity Press series Key Concepts in Political Theory. Not only does this represent his most recent thinking, but he makes good use of the chance to respond to recent criticisms, including reviews of the manuscript itself.⁷ He has always been especially adept at showing how his conception of fascism can encompass what are offered as alternative approaches. Writing in 2014 he managed

to expand his conception to bring phenomena he had mostly marginalised as “para-fascism” under his umbrella.⁸ In the new Polity book, he seeks to include both the recent emphasis on supranational interaction in fascist studies and recent calls for greater “egalitarianism”, with more attention to cases beyond Italy and Germany.

With respect to supranational interaction, Griffin notes that “it is precisely fascism’s fissiparous, factious, and promiscuous nature, as well the intense pragmatism of its drive to power at all costs, that predisposes it so powerfully towards transnational entanglements, borrowings from foreign role models, and hybridization. It thus needs to be studied not in isolation, but in its interactions, both with the national conservative right, and with the new, highly dynamic forms of right that emerged in many parts of the Westernized world after 1918”.⁹

In the same way, implicitly agreeing with those like Constantin Iordachi, Michel Dobry, and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Griffin cautions that we must avoid taking the Italian and German cases as paradigmatic, with the others as peripheral. Each is “a potentially important source of fresh insights into fascism’s nature as a political actor and social force, whether it failed in its bid to conquer state power or not”.¹⁰ Especially because Griffin takes pains to encompass the latest thinking about fascism, it makes sense to consider in his recent Polity book as well in pondering the relationship between totalitarianism and palingenesis.

THE 2005 INTRODUCTION

In his introduction to a 2005 collaborative volume, Griffin was notably ecumenical in stressing the heuristic value of fascism, totalitarianism, and political religion taken as a tripartite cluster, applied together. They are to be understood as overlapping and complementary, not as alternative or competing concepts.¹¹ (Those of a certain age might recall the title of Wolfgang Sauer’s once-influential article “National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?” published in 1967.¹²) Griffin usefully noted that linking totalitarianism to palingenesis and political religion undercuts the long-standing tendency to reduce it to an effort simply to monopolise power for its own sake.¹³ And he criticised those who miss “the obvious connections” between totalitarianism, political religion, and theories of fascism accenting palingenetic ultra-nationalism.¹⁴ But the origins and purposes of totalitarianism remained undeveloped, so its relationship with palingenesis was left uncertain.

Griffin went on to praise Emilio Gentile's essay that followed in the same volume.¹⁵ Gentile was arguably more responsible than anyone for the vogue of political religion as an analytical category by that point. But in this essay he was cautionary, especially about what to do with totalitarianism. Stressing that it was not a mere corollary of political religion, he ended up insisting on something like the opposite. Political religion, he argued, is but "one element of totalitarianism, not the principal element and not even the most important in defining its essence". And the nature of totalitarianism itself, he added, "remains a wholly open question".¹⁶

COMMONALITIES BETWEEN FASCISM AND COMMUNISM

Not long after, in his essay "Exploding the Continuum of History" (2008), now in *A Fascist Century* (2008), Griffin took on the vexed question of the relationship between fascism and Marxist communism, which have often, if often controversially, been lumped under the totalitarianism label.¹⁷ Many who featured such convergence focused on the operational level, on structure and function, systems of rule, methods of domination. But such prominent authorities as Hannah Arendt, Tzvetan Todorov, and Richard Shorten pointed to common totalist ideologies, with totalitarian implications for practice, so, in a sense, they were positing common origins of the totalitarian dimension.

The notion, now widespread but once heretical, that fascism was not merely counterrevolutionary but revolutionary in its own right, not anti-modern but a quest for an alternative modernity, demanded fresh thinking about the relationship between fascism and communism. Griffin challenged the enduring Marxist insistence that only communism had been genuinely revolutionary, and, not surprisingly, he brought both palingenesis and totalitarianism to bear in doing so. The relationship between them was bound to be at least implicitly at issue.

Griffin ended up suggesting not only that fascism was authentically revolutionary but that it was in a sense the archetypal modern revolution. Communism, too, stemmed from a palingenetic aspiration, though he found the sources and implications clearer in fascism. And he sought to strengthen the case by supplementing palingenesis with a dollop of Walter Benjamin's notions from his now-influential "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940).

Seeking to specify the mentality required for genuinely revolutionary agency, Benjamin fastened upon the orientation he idiosyncratically

labelled “historicism” as the obstacle to be overcome. The dominant contemporary mode of historical consciousness, historicism takes time as homogeneous and history as continuous, which is to make the status quo seem normal, inexorable. The alternative is break out of linear history, to “explode the continuum of history”, to “dynamite the time and space for a new order”, through “chips of messianic time” bound up with mythic remembrance. For Benjamin it is the particular mentality, revolving around this anti-historicist historical sense, that makes the essential revolutionary agency possible.¹⁸

In adducing Benjamin, Griffin was most basically concerned to show that innovative Marxists seemed open to aspects of palingenesis—which was not only to suggest that dialogue might be possible but also to indicate the terrain on which to start. This would mean turning from the operational issues that had long been the focus of efforts to consider the common features under the rubric of totalitarianism.

Embracing Benjamin helped show commonality in origins, but Griffin also stressed convergence in practice, insisting that there had been “a far closer and more uncomfortable affinity between fascism and Soviet or Maoist communism in practice than most Marxists would like to acknowledge”.¹⁹ And this had to do with a common totalitarianism that was not limited to operational similarities or a common totalism in ideology:

As forms of political modernism, both offered totalizing solutions to the problem posed by the decadence of liberal society, which were outstanding specimens of the application to socio-political engineering of the ‘historical predictions’ that Karl Popper identified with his concept of ‘historicism’... and with the mainspring of totalitarianism. In both cases, the utopia of a new society was formulated by blending scientific and technological discourse with mythic thinking, thereby producing that characteristic ideological product of modernity, ‘scientism’. Both, when implemented, spawned an elaborate ‘political religion’ and, in their Nazi and Stalinist versions, provided the rationale for mass murder on an industrial scale.²⁰

So fascism and communism overlapped as totalitarian in Karl Popper’s version, and totalitarianism, modernity, and political religion all came together. Palingenesis was implicit in the references to liberal decadence and mythic thinking.

Let us unpack a bit. The notion of “totalizing solutions to the problem posed by the decadence of liberal society” is fine up to a point, but we ask why such totalising solutions and sociopolitical engineering came

to appear not only necessary but also possible at this point. And did this totalising direction simply follow as a corollary of the palingenetic impulse, or did it have sources of its own? Moreover, whereas purging decadence is a useful start on fascist aspirations in general, we wonder what can be encompassed by “decadence” in the passage quoted. Can it cover whatever seemed problematic in the modern liberal mainstream—the performance of parliamentary government, for example? Do the problems Griffin had in mind in referring to “the problem posed by the decadence of liberal society” correspond to the problems that seem actually to have galvanised the fascists?

More generally, does this way of framing diagnosis and prescription do justice to the specifically fascist sense of challenge and opportunity, which was based on a perception that, whatever the common totalitarianism, the communist revolution was fundamentally misguided as a response to the problems of the liberal order. Is Griffin’s conception of fascist revolutionary content broad enough to make the Fascist Revolution seriously comparable to the communist revolution, which was more sweeping in certain obvious ways? Could “totalizing solutions to the problem posed by the decadence of liberal society” boil down simply to fuzzy mentality and myth, easily dismissed as superficial. On what basis could the fascists claim that theirs, and not the communists’, was the appropriate modern revolution, the appropriate systematic alternative to the liberal mainstream?

The reference to “socio-political engineering” is also fine, but the immediate approving reference to Popper’s concept of totalitarianism, linked to a particular understanding of historicism and “historical predictions”, raises questions. And the questions multiply when we add Benjamin, who envisioned anything but predictability. His conception specifies, first, the need and scope for human agency and, second, the requirements for *genuinely revolutionary* human agency.

Griffin was recognising that a particular, perhaps novel historical sense was at issue in both fascism and Soviet communism and helps, at least, explain the overlap between them. That historical sense necessarily had implications for human agency—the scope and the requirements for effective agency. And it would appear to have had implications for the relationship between palingenesis and totalitarianism. But though such a new historical sense does indeed seem to have been central to the commonality, we question whether Griffin could get at it with his mix of Popperian historical predictability and Benjaminian messianic time.

That mix is uneasy on the face of it. Even as he invoked Popper's historicism, Griffin noted that it entails "a curious reversal of the connotations given the term by Benjamin". Rather than probing the tension, however, he simply left it at that—as "a curious reversal".²¹ We wonder how the emphasis on "historical predictions" meshes with Benjamin's premium on breaking out of linear history. Conversely, how could revolution based on "now-time", exploding the continuum of history, yield regimes putatively relying on assumptions of historical predictability? We must question not only the combination but also the place of each element. Did Popper really show how to understand the historical sense at work in totalitarianism? How does the Benjaminian admixture relate to palingenesis? Even insofar as that admixture might seem usefully to supplement palingenesis, does it illuminate—or is it even consistent with—the historical sense in fact at work in totalitarianism?

In portraying fascism as revolutionary in his *Modernism and Fascism* of 2007, Griffin offered a few indications of the historical sense at issue, especially in referring to a new determination actually to make history, as opposed to merely watching it unfold.²² But he left this dimension undeveloped there, and he did not feature it in his overture to the Marxists the next year. However, he did occasionally refer to Benjamin in the 2007 book. And though he did not explicitly associate Benjamin's anti-historicist sense of history with palingenesis, in retrospect the potential for doing so is evident in some of his characterisations.²³ Griffin's overture to the Marxists actualised that potential; Benjamin's sense of messianic time became an illuminating supplement to palingenesis. Or perhaps it clarified a dimension that Griffin sensed had been essential to his conception of palingenesis all along. In any case, we must question the implications of the Benjaminian admixture for the relationship between palingenesis and totalitarianism.

THE IORDACHI SYMPOSIUM

In his contribution to a symposium organised by Constantin Iordachi in 2010, Griffin repeated his long-standing contention that fascism, reflecting a longing for palingenetic renewal, had returned in new forms after 1945. These forms were not totalitarian, he conceded, but that did not make them any less fascist. We should not assume that totalitarianism is a defining feature of fascism.

So determined was Griffin to encompass disparate post-1945 phenomena as fascist that he seemed to move away from the position he had taken in 2005. Totalitarianism had come to renewed currency by 2005 in tandem with political religion, and at that point Griffin insisted on their interconnections, as we have seen. But now, in 2010, totalitarianism did not appear essential to fascism after all.

Classic fascism, Griffin maintained, became totalitarian only for contingent, historically specific reasons that he seemed to find relatively easy to grasp. Triggered especially by the concatenation surrounding World War I, classic fascism was an innovative, if ultimately disastrous, experiment, departure, or eruption at a particular moment from within the wider ongoing modern deployment.²⁴ So although, from Griffin's perspective, that wider deployment and the process of adjusting to modernity have obviously continued, it is indeed possible to draw lines around classic, totalitarian fascism, which ended in 1945.

Meanwhile, I had come to insist on the utility of the totalitarianism category, if recast and loosened somewhat. I was persuaded by Iberianists like António Costa Pinto and Mary Vincent who pinpointed flaws in the conventional, long-standing use of the totalitarianism-authoritarianism binary in characterising the Salazar and Franco regimes. Each scholar was willing to recognise degrees, however, and I came to argue that, despite some simplistic overuse, totalitarianism retains its utility as a differentiating principle. As Albert Kéchichian argued, for example, the French Croix de Feu was not fascist precisely because it lacked a totalitarian impulse.²⁵ In short, there could be no fascism without such a totalitarian impulse.

So Griffin was saying that palingenesis might take totalitarian form or might not; whether or not it did so was secondary for the problem of fascism. I was saying, and still say, that if the germ, whatever its source, however it is characterised, did not take totalitarian form in action, it did not yield fascism. I was obviously at loggerheads with Griffin. What is the source of the divergence?

REDUCTION AND TELEOLOGY IN GRIFFIN'S RECENT ACCOUNT OF PALINGENESIS

Up to a point, Griffin's ideal type, wound around palingenetic ultra-nationalism, is hard to dispute. From the fascist perspective, there was a systematic problem demanding a revolutionary solution, with the nation

as the focus. That problem can easily be spun as “decadence”, Griffin’s favoured term, and the solution as “palingenesis”—again, connoting quasi-mystical rebirth, not merely radical change. But each term is elastic, and much can be honed to be made to fit. In the end, however, his conception proves not so much flexible as restrictive because he adds on notions that would not seem necessary corollaries of the ideal type.

Partly, no doubt, because it is attractively aimed at students, Griffin’s recent Polity book offers some especially pointed characterisations of the sources and implications of the palingenetic impulse. He insists, convincingly, that palingenesis cuts deeper than political utopianism in characterising the psychological mechanism fuelling the revolutionary drive at issue.²⁶ But making this point quickly leads him into muddier waters as he betrays tendencies towards reductionism, on the one hand, and teleological thinking, on the other.

The palingenetic impulse, as Griffin puts it, stems from a profound psychological longing that precedes the formulation of a transformative mission or actual policies.²⁷ It leads to identification with the ultra-nation, which can “serve as a portal to transcendence for individuals whose personal lives have been shattered by socio-political and economic upheavals that threaten their core identity as individuals, or whose inner lives might otherwise be experienced as devoid of purpose, meaning and hope because of personal crises they are experiencing”.²⁸ This is essentially the “canopy loss” that Griffin featured in his earlier *Modernism and Fascism*. In the last analysis, the problem—decadence, anomie, canopy loss—affects populations differentially so that it is the “losers”, yes, those who “can’t adjust to modernity”, to recall the old cliché, who are subject to palingenetic longing. As in *Modernism and Fascism*, what had purportedly begun as a quest for an alternative modernity, treated empathetically, turns out to have been merely an unhealthy maladjustment.²⁹

But for Griffin the palingenetic longing does not merely betray a psychological weakness at its origin. It has implications that he draws out in a particular direction, as when he notes that many recent fascists have had to conceal “the totalizing, violent, illiberal implications of achieving their ultimate goal”.³⁰ Or consider his advice to students: “studying an aspect of fascism in depth in a humanistic spirit has its own reward. It should help immunize you against fanaticism, against the demonising of ‘Others’, against the adoption of a paranoid mindset about the enemies of the people who are allegedly destroying society and so must be removed or destroyed in their turn”.³¹ We find similar characterisations elsewhere

when Griffin ventures beyond the originating psychological minimum. So it seems that the palingenetic longing, whenever able to bloom, leads almost inevitably to terrible outcomes.

Featuring these dimensions of fascism clearly reflects knowledge of the actual outcomes and indicates teleological thinking, which is what leads Griffin to add on the notions—stereotypical notions—that would not seem necessary corollaries of the ideal type. In such characterisations, Griffin hardly seems to be listening to his subjects with “methodological empathy”, describing them in terms they themselves would have understood.

To be sure, Griffin might well respond that whereas we should approach these figures with a more open mind at first, we can and should then evaluate their choices in the light of our knowledge of the outcomes. We do not simply leave it at empathy, in other words; once we have empathetically penetrated the aspiration or vision, we must diagnose and specify what was driving it all. But how much should our knowledge of the outcomes affect our sense of the range of possibilities and aspirations at the outset—and during the fascist period more generally? Griffin’s reductionist and teleological tendencies make him quick to restrict that range.

Would Giovanni Gentile or Giuseppe Bottai or Sergio Panunzio have accepted these stereotypical notions about hate, violence, and paranoia? What did they talk about instead when envisioning radical renewal in Italy? Certainly they all were seeking a qualitatively better future for the nation, but from there it is not so easy to characterise their sense of problems and solutions. What they found necessary to overcome can certainly be construed as decadence, but with his accent on abiding psychological needs and modern anomie, Griffin uses “decadence” to reduce discontents to the same level. To suggest, as many of the creators of Italian fascism did, that Italy’s capitalist bourgeoisie was not robust but decadent, or that the parliamentary system fed on and bred such decadence, cannot be understood as a response to modern anomie. But Griffin’s framework is too limited to enable him to consider what else might have been at work.

Rather than reducing fascist aspirations to some psychological longing for meaning in response to personal crisis, we need more room for an energising sense of possibility, of opportunity better to shape the future in the light of historically specific challenges. World War I and the dramatic political changes that quickly followed seemed to have produced a newly

open-ended situation. We recall Constantin Iordachi's emphasis on the scope for experiment and multi-polar creativity, which might lead in varied directions.³² Taking fascism as a response to a new sense of challenge and opportunity would surely be more congruent than Griffin's psychological reductionism with the notion that the fascists were seeking an alternative modernity.

We also need more openness to the possibility that the outcomes stemmed less from the originating palingenetic aspiration, in almost teleological fashion, than from an uncertain, contingent trajectory. We recall Michel Dobry's call for less telos and greater openness to the contingencies, even to the possibility that fascism could have turned out differently.³³ That the outcomes in fact entailed terroristic excess, genocide, and disastrous failure is not in question, but how did they come to be?

To be sure, insofar as it entails implications for action, Griffin's palingenesis is arguably an improvement over an emphasis on common totalist, quasi-deterministic ideologies, as pinpointed by Hannah Arendt and still widely featured. Because it is less like a blueprint, palingenesis is less likely to invite, and may even preclude, deterministic readings. Moreover, Griffin certainly tries to encompass any such emphasis on trajectory, especially as he treats interaction, "messy mixture," and fissiparousness. He takes care to acknowledge contrasting fascist varieties and directions, and he emphasises that even with a common source in palingenetic longing, fascism was not static but constantly evolving and adapting, though always with a drive towards revolutionary activism and change.³⁴ But Griffin's teleological tendency restricts what the trajectory could have entailed. It affords insufficient scope for the openness and uncertainty at the time—and thus for the actual contingent dynamic that led to the disastrous outcomes.

Although palingenesis offers a useful start, the sense of the problem, but also the sense of the scope for overcoming, the sense of openness and possibility, cannot be understood in terms of palingenetic longing. There was more to the fascist sense of the world than Griffin implies; its content cannot be reduced even to palingenesis, let alone to some psychological maladjustment putatively fuelling the palingenetic impulse. But the richness of the content meant that aspirations sometimes jostled, feeding the uncertain trajectory. And the outcomes cannot be understood without greater attention to the contingencies of that trajectory.

PALINGENETIC IMPULSE AND TOTALITARIAN TRAJECTORY

Still, Griffin's add-ons to palingenesis, especially "the totalizing, violent, illiberal implications of achieving their ultimate goal", suggest not only a trajectory but a specifically totalitarian trajectory. This might even seem to imply that totalitarianism as a mode of action is a corollary of palingenesis—even if post-1945 neo-fascists have lacked the wherewithal for a totalitarian effort. At the very least, Griffin seems to be positing a definite relationship between palingenesis and totalitarianism, but the nature of that relationship is essentially left hanging.

In the *Polity* book, he refers to totalitarianism at a number of points to characterise the earlier fascist aspirations and regimes. On one occasion he even sounds like Hannah Arendt, though she had in mind the Nazi and Soviet cases whereas he was considering the two fascist regimes. He characterises both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany as totalitarian but insists that their attempted totalist revolutions broke apart on the rocks of human nature. Human beings cannot be shaped by ideological or terroristic coercion. Griffin goes on to contend that the terror state is always a travesty of the revolutionary and totalitarian utopia proclaimed by its propaganda.³⁵

But totalitarianism comes up somewhat haphazardly, casually, in the *Polity* book, as if it were self-explanatory, with no systematic consideration of sources, relationships, or implications necessary. For example, the Nazis were attempting a totalitarian revolution driven by a core myth of the imminent rebirth of the nation-race from decadence. At the same time, totalitarianism is here linked to German modernity, so Germany had the means for crimes against humanity on an industrial scale.³⁶ Elsewhere Griffin refers still more causally to "totalitarian state control" and "both totalitarian regimes".³⁷ What do such usages gloss over?

Totalitarianism remains a problematic and controversial category. It has certainly been misused on occasion, and some specialists advocate abandoning it altogether. At the same time, such authorities as Tzvetan Todorov and Richard Shorten find a utopian longing inherent in totalitarianism itself, a longing that may seem congruent with Griffin's psychological mainspring. If such utopianism is indeed central to totalitarianism, the relationship with palingenesis and Griffin's conception of fascism would be easier to pin down.

I have argued elsewhere for a recast notion of totalitarianism wound around a new mode of collective action in response to the new sense of

possibility, of unprecedented scope for experiment.³⁸ In contrast with, say, the “structural model” or any notion that top-down “total domination” was the aim, I sought to be truer to what the Italian Fascists had in mind in fastening upon the term after it had been coined by anti-fascists in 1923 to criticise the fledgling Fascist regime. To the Fascists actually embracing totalitarianism, it suggested only a direction for action, not a blueprint specifying what to do. Rather than a utopian expectation that some state of perfection was to be achieved once and for all, totalitarianism simply specified the requirements for the ongoing collective action necessary to navigate the newly open-ended world. This collective human agency required the ongoing nurturing and mobilisation of a collective will, which, in turn, required penetrating all areas of life.

But the specifically totalitarian mode of action had implications that would only become clear with practice. The aim was not merely activism “to keep the masses in motion” or some such, but purposive activity to tackle unprecedented great tasks, anything and everything. The sense of doing so was itself energising, but it also invited overreach. Once they had started acting, the unforeseen contingencies of the trajectory led to radicalisation, and the enterprises undertaken could spin out of control. So to understand not only outcomes but what happened along the way we must attend to the specifically totalitarian trajectory itself, uncoupled from whatever palingenetic impulse, whether understood as abiding or as simply fuelling the departure at the outset. Or perhaps it need not be uncoupled altogether but simply made more an independent variable than it seems to be for Griffin.

Put differently, attention to some originating impulse, however characterised, cannot in itself enable us to understand the fascist trajectory. Whatever the source of the impulse, we need the implications of the specifically totalitarian mode of action chosen. To carry the argument a step further, even if palingenesis especially invites the totalitarian mode of action, totalitarianism takes off on its own, with implications that could not be derived from the palingenetic impulse itself. For many, getting caught up in this new mode of collective action was itself energising, but the totalitarian trajectory caught people up in various ways, so, again, the actual contingent course must be traced.

BACK TO THE FASCISM-COMMUNISM OVERLAP

With all this in mind let us return to Griffin's effort, in his 2008 essay, to account for the commonality between the fascist and communist revolutions. What they had most in common, as he saw it, was ultimately a palingenetic source, but he also accented a common totalitarianism, as we noted above. In the light of what we established in the preceding section, we can better consider the extent to which that common totalitarianism was essentially a corollary of palingenesis and the extent to which embarking on the totalitarian mode of action entailed a logic, or illogic, of its own.

Griffin could not convincingly account for the commonality because of his attenuated, somewhat perfunctory understanding of totalitarianism. The limits are evident in his way of taking Karl Popper's notion for granted. I noted above that a new historical sense, bound up with both palingenesis and totalitarianism, seems indeed to have been central to the commonality, but I questioned whether Griffin could get at it with his uneasy mix of Popperian historical predictability and Benjaminian messianic time. To characterise the new historical sense requires an alternative to whatever combination of Popper and Benjamin. And the difference in historical sense has implications for how we conceive totalitarianism as a mode of action, the trajectory it entails.

Griffin's reliance on Popper itself throws us off. The mainspring of totalitarianism was not historical determinism, as too many continue to assume, but something closer to its opposite, a giddy but also unnerving sense of open-endedness in the light of the waning of developmentalism and thus the scope for predictability. Up to a point, to be sure, the Soviets and the Nazis relied on semi-deterministic ideologies from the nineteenth-century, but they sensed that those ideologies were insufficient. History was not necessarily on their side; there was no deterministic assurance. It was all up to them acting within an uncertain history, riddled with contingencies. But history could be mastered through human agency of a certain, totalitarian sort. The implications of this mode of action, reflecting the sense of challenge and opportunity at that historical moment, carried well beyond the specific purposes of achieving some socialist or racialist utopia, the manifest direction of those ideologies.

Lacking any such ready-made ideology, the Italian Fascists could only proceed in a more "naked", "seat of the pants" fashion, and it was partly thus, no doubt, that they explicitly embraced the totalitarianism category

as the Nazis and Soviets did not. But the Italians had bits and pieces from Giuseppe Mazzini, Georges Sorel, Vilfredo Pareto, the earlier Giovanni Gentile, and even Lenin suggesting the scope and the requirements for the new mode of collective action necessary to seize the opportunity and master the historical moment.

If Popper was *not* the way to understand the historical sense at work in totalitarianism, then Griffin did not pinpoint the basis of the totalitarian convergence, though that convergence still centred on a new historical sense. The very fact that Griffin sought to combine Popper with Benjamin indicates limits in his account, but if Popper drops out, the Popper-Benjamin tension does not in itself keep us from grasping the historical sense at issue. The question then concerns how Benjamin meshes with the historical sense that was in fact at work in totalitarianism.

If determinism and predictability are off the table, the historical sense and the mode of action might seem understandable in Benjaminian terms as rupture or “chips of Messianic time”. We have already noted that Benjamin’s categories might appear to supplement palingenesis. Insofar as we combine them, we do indeed seem to have something like the mentality fuelling the totalitarian direction. Moreover, the Benjaminian admixture might seem to enable Griffin to associate palingenesis more completely with totalitarianism. At the very least, that admixture might appear to illuminate both the totalitarian historical sense and the relationship between palingenesis and totalitarianism.

Certainly the totalitarian mode of action was anything but “historicist” in Benjamin’s negative sense of the term. And it included elements of will, myth, and improvisation. At issue for both Benjamin and the totalitarians was a wild sense that anything is possible if the collective will is marshalled effectively. With normal continuity broken, a radically open-ended history offered the scope for doing the extraordinary, as the mainstream liberals would not even be able to imagine.

But the parallel only carries so far. Although Griffin plausibly associated the Benjaminian element with palingenesis, that element is not sufficient to account for and characterise the totalitarian sense of place in history. The sense of the scope for effective response to the challenge, the sense of openness to experiment, but also the sense of risk did not entail—or require—any such Benjaminian dimension. And whereas the new historical sense entailed a rupture in a sense, Benjamin’s categories do not illuminate what it entailed, which was not so much a break in

“normal” continuity, but a break from developmentalism and even ordinary progress, a break that seemed to warrant the new totalitarian form of human agency. This was not a matter of “now-time”, which might appear to converge with palingenetic rebirth, but a sense of entering into a new world in which history would be made in the new totalitarian way on an ongoing basis, on into the future. So in relying on Benjamin, Griffin misses much of the totalitarian trajectory in the cases of both fascism and communism—and thus misconstrues the area of commonality.

Concluding his essay, Griffin made explicit what had been implicit all along. Any communist or fascist revolution, necessarily bound up with palingenetic myth, would degenerate in characteristic ways and eventually fail.³⁹ But here too he seemed to fall into unnecessarily teleological thinking. The practice that stemmed from the Italian, Soviet, and German totalitarian revolutions did entail a characteristic dynamic with certain features in common, from narrowing into truncated modes of participation to a tendency towards partly out-of-control radicalisation, which could include mass killing. These outcomes followed less from palingenetic myth and more from the novel, grandiose totalitarian mode of response to mainstream modernity. But Griffin’s attenuated conception of totalitarianism kept him from treating or even considering the trajectories as specifically totalitarian, requiring greater attention to contingencies, rather than as the almost inevitable outcomes of the palingenetic impulse itself. Even the deleterious role of myth cannot be assessed without a wider sense of the possible reasons for the failure in each case, including what proved the logic of the totalitarian mode of action itself.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that Griffin sometimes seems to imply that totalitarianism is a corollary of palingenesis. Insofar as he does so, we encounter another line of questioning, in the light of his contribution to the Iordachi symposium. If fascism entails palingenesis by definition, and if totalitarianism is a corollary of palingenesis, then how can he argue that fascism does not require totalitarianism? If pushed this far he would perhaps concede that the post-1945 phenomena he features are totalitarian in aspiration and potential, as, in Albert Kéchichian’s eyes, the Croix de Feu was not. These more recent phenomena simply lack the wherewithal for totalitarian practice. But if that is the argument, Griffin’s claim in the Iordachi symposium that fascism can be conceived apart from totalitarianism seems too strong.

So does fascism require totalitarianism? In one sense, this is simply a matter of definition, but we must consider what we miss if we distinguish fascism from totalitarianism to the extent Griffin at least sometimes proposes. It is not in any way to excuse the contemporary phenomena he so clearly detests, and for good reason, to contend that severing fascism from totalitarianism compromises our understanding of the classic fascist movements and regimes. Griffin's too-casual treatment of the totalitarian dimension glosses over the nature of the fascist trajectory and its import for what earlier fascism turned out to be.

So we need more attention to the totalitarian trajectory and less reliance on palingenesis. But it is not as if we must choose between the two; totalitarianism need not be taken as a *completely* independent variable, uncoupled from palingenesis altogether. Rather than either/or, this is a matter of degrees, proportions. However, Griffin relies so heavily on palingenesis, with quasi-surreptitious add-ons, that he leaves the implications of the totalitarian mode of action neglected or undeveloped. At the very least, we need a better understanding of the relationship between palingenesis and totalitarianism within the fascist mix.

So again we find Roger Griffin, always rich with insight, provoking further discussion. I find slippages and ambiguities in his several ways of relating palingenetic fascism to totalitarianism, and I hope that pinpointing them, drawing out the questions they suggest, might stimulate still further discussion. For part of the drill is the partial disagreement that helps us further refine our categories and deepen our understanding. In that spirit I offer this essay in homage to Roger and his indispensable work—palingenesis and all.

NOTES

1. First, I commented on Griffin's well-known "new consensus" article, Griffin, Roger. 2002. The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies. *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, 1, 21–43. Invited commentaries by David D. Roberts, Alexander DeGrand, Mark Antliff, and Thomas Linehan appeared in the next issue: 2002. *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, 2, 259–274. Second, I offered one of many invited comments on a lead article by Griffin, then one of the comments on his response to the first round of commentary, in the German journal *Erwägen Wissen Ethik (EWE)* in 2004. The whole set of exchanges was then published in book form. See Roberts, David D. 2006. *Understanding Fascism as Historically Specific*,

- and Roberts, David D. 2006. Roger Griffin, Ernst Nolte, and the Historical Place of Fascism. In *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right*, Griffin, Roger, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland, eds., 202–204 and 376–380. Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2006. Third, I treated Griffin's *Modernism and Fascism* together with two other books in a review essay, Roberts, David D. 2009. Fascism, Modernism, and the Quest for an Alternative Modernity. *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, 1, 91–102. Fourth, I treated Griffin's essay "Exploding the Continuum of History," in Roberts, David D. 2010. Fascism, Marxism, and the Question of Modern Revolution. *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, 2, 183–201. Griffin's essay is cited and discussed below.
2. Roberts, David D. 2014. Fascism, Para-fascism, and the Framework for Interactive Political Innovation During the Era of the Two World Wars. In *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Interwar Europe*, Pinto, António Costa and Aristotle Kallis, eds., 42–66. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Roberts, David D. 2016. *Fascist Interactions: Proposals for a New Approach to Fascism and Its Era, 1919–1945*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn.
 3. As evidence I cite my first book (Roberts, David D. 1979. *The Syndicalist Tradition and Italian Fascism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, recently published in Italian translation as 2019. *Dal sindacalismo rivoluzionario al corporativismo fascista*. Rome: Aracne, 2019), with a presentation by Antonio Messina, a preface by Francesco Perfetti, and a new introduction by the author.
 4. Griffin, Roger. 2018. *Fascism: An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 41–42.
 5. Ibid., 41–42, is good on why he adopted the term "palingenesis", unfamiliar though it was in English.
 6. Iordachi, Constantin. 2010. Fascism in Inter-War East Central and South-east Europe: Toward a New Transnational Research Agenda. *East Central Europe* 37, 197; Vincent, Mary. 2009. Spain. In *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, Bosworth, R. J. B., ed., 376. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
 7. Full disclosure: I was among the reviewers of the manuscript for Polity, and Griffin thanks me, among others, in his preface to the published book.
 8. Griffin, Roger. 2014. Foreword: Il ventennio parafascista? The Past and Future of a Neologism in Comparative Fascist Studies. In *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship*, xv–xvi, xviii.
 9. Griffin, *Fascism*, 139.
 10. Ibid., 65.
 11. Griffin, Roger. 2005. Introduction: God's Counterfeiters? Investigating the Triad of Fascism, Totalitarianism and (Political) Religion. In *Fascism*,

- Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, Griffin, Roger, ed., 16, 21. London and New York: Routledge.
12. Sauer Wolfgang. 1967. National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism? *American Historical Review* 73, 2, 404–424.
 13. Griffin, Introduction: God's Counterfeiters? 21–22.
 14. Ibid., 18–19.
 15. Ibid., 21–22.
 16. Gentile, Emilio. 2005. Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticisms of an Interpretation. In *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion*, 65–66.
 17. In an article cited in note 1 above, I applauded Griffin's effort to challenge the Marxists by taking a fresh look what the fascist and communist revolutions had in common. However, I questioned his way of framing the challenge. See Roberts, Fascism, Marxism, and the Question of Modern Revolution, 183–201. After a bit of correspondence in the aftermath, Griffin and I invited a group of Marxist or left-leaning scholars to respond to our two essays and to write their own comments, with Griffin and I then to provide separate responses. The result is Griffin, Roger, and David D. Roberts, eds. 2012. *'The Fascist Revolution': Utopia or Façade? Reconciling Marxist and Non-Marxist Approaches*. Special issue, *European Journal of Political Theory* 11, 4.
 18. Benjamin, Walter. 1969. Theses on the Philosophy of History. In *Illuminations*, Arendt, Hannah, ed., 256, 261–264. New York: Schocken.
 19. Feldman, Matthew, ed. 2008. *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 63.
 20. Ibid.
 21. Ibid.
 22. Griffin, Roger. 2007. *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 4, 48–52.
 23. Ibid., 91–92, 114, 132, 362–63.
 24. Griffin, Roger. 2010. Uniqueness and Family Resemblances in Generic Fascism. *East Central Europe* 37, 339.
 25. Kéchichian, Albert. 2006. *Les Croix de Feu à L'Âge des Fascismes: Travail, Famille, Patrie*. Paris: Champ Vallon.
 26. Griffin, *Fascism*, 41.
 27. Ibid., 40–41.
 28. Ibid., 44.
 29. For a fuller discussion, see Roberts, Fascism, Modernism, and the Quest for an Alternative Modernity, 91–95.
 30. Griffin, *Fascism*, 41.
 31. Ibid., 141.
 32. Iordachi, Fascism in Inter-War East Central and Southeast Europe, 64, 176, 196.

33. Dobry, Michel. 2011. Desperately Seeking ‘Generic Fascism’: Some Discordant Thoughts on the Academic Recycling of Indigenous Categories. In *Rethinking the Nature of Fascism: Comparative Perspectives*, Pinto, António Costa, ed., 57, 64–65, 78. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
34. Griffin, *Fascism*, 61–62, 67.
35. Ibid., 88–90.
36. Ibid., 66.
37. Ibid., 83, 89.
38. See especially Roberts, David D. 2006. *The Totalitarian Experiment in Twentieth-Century Europe: Understanding the Poverty of Great Politics*. London and New York: Routledge; but also Roberts, *Fascist Interactions*, 208–215. See also David D. Roberts. 2020. *Totalitarianism*, for the Polity Press series “Key Concepts in Political Theory”. Cambridge: Polity, due out in the spring of 2020.
39. Feldman, ed., *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, 68.

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Fascist Communities of Action and Violence: A Praxeological Approach

Sven Reichardt

TRENDS IN COMPARATIVE FASCISM STUDIES

Since the 1950s, research on fascism has been engaged in heated debates on the concept of totalitarianism. Most conceptions of fascism and totalitarianism have sought to explain different phenomena and were developed on the basis of divergent empirical research. Studies in totalitarianism are strongest when analysing techniques of domination and in distinguishing between dictatorships and democracies, while the concept of fascism developed since the 1970s has proven itself fruitful for research on the political movements and consolidation of power that preceded the establishment of fascist regimes. Scholars have come to value the concept

This essay is an updated and revised version of my article: 2014. *Faschistische Tatgemeinschaften*, in *Der Faschismus in Europa: Wege der Forschung*, Thomas Schlemmer and Hans Woller, eds., 73–88. Munich: de Gruyter Oldenbourg. Translated from German by Adam Bresnahan.

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of fascism as a robust tool for researching the social-historical causes and contexts behind the rise and success of various fascisms.¹

The boom of Anglo-American research on fascism since the 1990s has ushered in a new, comparative perspective that complements the concept of totalitarianism rather than countering it. This approach no longer interprets fascism as the symptom and outcome of a crisis in capitalist society. Similarly, it no longer seeks to define it through analyses of its members' social backgrounds. Instead, the new research has taken the fascists' self-understandings and self-representation more seriously than did a large bit of older research, all while avoiding repeating dated claims from the historiography on fascist thought. A key project of this newer research has been to write a cultural history of fascism that treats as performative acts its symbols, values, aesthetics, rituals, and, last but not least, religious features.²

THE PRAXEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FASCISM

One among these comparative approaches is the praxeological analysis of fascism. It aims to fuse both microhistorical and macrohistorical perspectives while connecting research on social history with research on the cultural history of styles of thought, behavioural conventions, and discourses.³ The ways in which historical situations condition action, social relations, discourses, the symbolic organisation of reality: praxeology understands all these phenomena not as separate, but as intertwined complexes that are embedded in institutions and social networks. By placing primacy on relations, praxeology's methodology serves to mediate between the classic oppositions of subjectivity and objectivity, actions and structures, individual and society.⁴

Researchers whose work is informed by praxeology view fascist ideology neither as a construct of intellectual history, nor as a rigid set of attitudes and positions, nor as an abstract, clearly definable entity. Rather, they grasp it as a mutable political practice that can only be studied 'in actu'. Human action and communication are praxeology's central interests. It deciphers the ideas and symbols of fascists as aspects of their political activities and does not seek to interpret their meaning in the separate world of ideas and texts. Fascism can only be understood in relation to the concrete situations that fascists sought to influence through their organisations and actions.

Actions do not simply execute something thought and decided beforehand. As the sociologist Karl H. Hörning reminds us, practice theory primarily deals with the ways in which ‘thinking is produced *through* action and less with cognitive knowledge of the world’. Action has its own causes that originate in the process of acting itself. Put succinctly, while classic means-ends schemata and the works of rational choice theorists portray action as something goal-oriented, utilitarian, and user-centred, practice theory breaks with logocentric models of action and spotlights actors’ experiential knowledge and practical skills.⁵ In his influential book *The Creativity of Action*, German sociologist Hans Joas draws on American pragmatist John Dewey’s conception of the reciprocal relation between ends and means. Dewey ‘does not presuppose that the actor generally has a clear goal, and that it only remains to make the appropriate choice of means. On the contrary, the goals of actions are usually relatively undefined, and only become more specific as a consequence of the decision to use particular means’. The availability of certain means can also expand the field of possible ends: ‘The dimension of means in relation to the dimension of goals is in no way neutral’.⁶

The idea is that goals are always bound to a specific situation and that by positing a goal, the actor always places himself in a particular relation to that situation. The praxeological approach views action and the capacity to make sense of a situation as being inseparably bound up with one another. Thus, praxeological research studies the ways in which concepts and meanings are *generated* out of situated practices. In contrast to older hermeneutic conceptions of culture, praxeology does not view the individual actor as a sovereign agent. Instead, actors are part of the intersubjective, situational negotiation of meaning. Praxeologists conceive of historical actors as interpreting subjects whose actions have the capacity to destabilise sedimented meanings and transform the conditions of action within a particular situation.

Alongside contextualising actions and ideologies, praxeologists understand performative action, symbolic communication, and ritual demonstrations as being inextricably bound up with culturally defined codes. But rituals, events, speech acts, and behavioural patterns are not just reflections of predefined notions and intentions. Rather, the totality of engagement with them—from the process of producing and organising them to their reception and repetition—itself engenders meanings and forges realities. This, in turn, always involves certain media, whose own

logics leave their mark on the outcome. Further, rituals acquire their innovative power by transgressing established norms.⁷

Finally, from the praxeological perspective, culture and power are always interlocked. Still, like with the discussion of ideology, the praxeologist does not view culture as a homogeneous, stable, discrete unit. Conflicts over the meaning and value of cultural traditions, experiences, and practices are a bread-and-butter topic of praxeological research. Creating cultural consensus is difficult—the historical exception, not the rule of life in society. Cultural practices are contested, varying, and incomplete, because they are products of asymmetric power struggles between unequal actors.⁸ Conceiving of culture as a perpetual struggle over meanings, positions, symbols, and values strips it of its social and political ambiguity and recognises it as a dynamic force in a concrete context. Because practice theory thematises both the creative and reproductive dimensions of action, its analyses of time, process, continuity, discontinuity, development, and transformation are always anchored in history.

FASCISM

The praxeological perspective on the origins of fascist ideology and practice represents a turn away from Israeli political scientist Zeev Sternhell's assertion that fascism was a distinct ideology with clear predecessors in the history of political thought.⁹ In fact, not even National Socialism achieved ideological coherence, and this despite the indisputable fact that racism was one of its keystones. As early as 1934, Nazi jurist Reinhard Höhn wrote that feeling the National Socialist 'spirit of community' did not have anything to do with 'being convinced by reasons', continuing that one could not bring it about 'through knowledge alone'.¹⁰ Alongside 'kinship of blood and race' and a common leader, Höhn believed that the unity and uniformity of the population had to be created by people 'experiencing community' in as many aspects of life as possible.

In 1935, philosopher Ernst Bloch described this kernel of fascist philosophy: 'It is not the "theory" of the National Socialists but rather their energy which is serious, the fanatical-religious strain which does not merely stem from despair and stupidity, the strangely roused strength of faith'.¹¹ Fascism's focus was undoubtedly on the 'political field' of power struggles, affects, emotions, and strategic goals. A secondary matter was its work in the 'intellectual field', where it generally failed to develop a

cohesive ideology, stringent doctrine, and consistent vision. Fascists saw the proof of an idea's truth in its effects, force, and success. Fascists viewed themselves as men of action and interpreted their own strength of will as an expression of their attitude towards life and their belonging to a superior race.¹²

Thus, rather than looking to its ideological convictions to understand fascism, praxeologists find a stronger explanation in its experiential dimension, a point emphasised by fascist intellectuals themselves. The fascists' routine bodily exercises and collective symbols exerted a centripetal force on those who practiced and consumed them. 'If you don't grasp the community in the flag and salute', wrote Nazi professor of pedagogy Alfred Baeumler in May 1933, 'then you don't understand the whole thing'. The integrative force of symbols, Baeumler stated in his inaugural lecture, could function as a key component of a sort of ethics: 'Humanity is there where people believe in a symbol; it is there where people get engaged on account of a symbol that electrifies them and inspires them to organize and act'.¹³ This particular ethics might be summed up by saying that, in attributing so much significance to symbols and rituals, the fascists mixed a sacralised form of sublimity with a fear-inducing uncanny and a popular type of carnivalesque spectacle.¹⁴ These three elements were weighted differently in different versions of fascism. While the Italian Fascists combined modernist, avant-garde sublimity, violent virility, and the traditional, popular language and symbols of Catholicism, the National Socialists blended the religiosity of the Führer cult with the threatening terror of the SS's racist aesthetic and the collectivism of folksy community life.¹⁵

Despite divergences in their political statements on individual issues and despite variations in their responses to their own concrete situations, fascists remained within certain limits. Fascism can be defined as a form of political and social practice that articulated itself in symbols, rituals, and worldviews anchored in a racist, homogenous, 'völkisch' community. These basic tenets of fascism were immediately evident in the lives of those belonging to fascist movements, whose members were characterised by inwardness and a lack of empathy. In contrast, the intransigence of the communists derived from their subscription to a consistent ideology. The barriers imposed by their ideological surrogate world were what made open discussion, rational compromise, and negotiation difficult for the communists, whereas the fascists were incapable of these things because

of their collective political style. What united the fascists was a habitus rooted in an aestheticised cult of the will and violence.¹⁶

CONTEXT: THE SITUATEDNESS OF FASCISTS' POSITIONS AND PRACTICES

Fascism would have been inconceivable without World War I and its detrimental effects on European economies, societies, and cultures. Just as well, it would have been inconceivable without the rapid ascent of its primary opponent, communism. Both facilitated the rise of fascism's violent communities of action and society's tacit acceptance. It fed on a series of social factors that offered fertile grounds for radicalisation: the prominence of eugenicist theories of social welfare; wartime fantasies of a society shaped from head to toe by an all-encompassing state; a nationalism built on (ethnically defined) community and camaraderie; the tolerance of violence and paramilitarism as normal means of political conflict. These issues were widespread throughout Europe and played into the hands of fascist movements.

In interwar Europe, the representatives of the fascist movements were right-wing nationalists supportive of a strong state, racists with pseudoscientific ideas, and violent paramilitary fighters. They marked a radicalisation of developments that both preceded them and were continuing parallel to them. Fascisms distinguished themselves from right-wing authoritarian parties by expressly striving to become mass movements with broad social participation, and they explicitly associated participation with violence.¹⁷ In the words of Zygmunt Bauman, the 'modern state was a gardening state', and its fascist variant conjoined participation in its project of social engineering with the political mobilisation of the population.¹⁸

Fascism's high valuation of the dictatorial state, its ethnocentric definition of the body politic, and its fixation on *Lebensraum* increased the need for technocratic rationality. Experts had an easy time translating its diffuse racism and vague goals into the language of sober objectivity, which they then employed to guide demographic development, implement racist health policies, and plan settlement programmes.¹⁹ The path to a society homogenised, purged, and standardised by bureaucratic procedures necessarily led to pogroms, extermination, and violence. The fascists presented the power of death as the complement of a positive

‘power of life’. Thus, engaging in violence and murder was supposed to serve as an invigorating stimulant for the population, which in turn lent legitimacy to repressive means and the total control and regulation of society. The issue is pithily captured by Michel Foucault:

Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed. ... But the existence in question is no longer the juridical existence of sovereignty; at stake is the biological existence of a population. If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population.²⁰

All fascist movements and regimes were racist and all declared the ‘ethnic purification’ of the population as their primary aim. This racism manifested itself as anti-Semitism, which stood at the core not only of National Socialism, but also of Romanian fascism under Zelea Codreanu, Hungarian fascism under Ferenc Szálasi, and the Croatian Ustaše under Ante Pavelić.²¹

Recent research has also demonstrated that Italian Fascism harboured anti-Semitic, racist views and that, in this regard, it was not distinct from National Socialism in terms of structure, but only in terms of degree. This is evidenced by Italy’s anti-Semitic laws—which were not simply passed at the behest of Germany—by the racism of its population policies and medical system, by its settler colonialism in Africa, and by its actions during its occupations of Albania, Croatia, southern France, and Greece. The consensus among contemporary scholars is that Italy’s fascist regime began moving closer to the Nazis’ racist social policies around 1935–1936 and that, at least initially, it did so more radically than the authoritarian states in Hungary, Romania, and Poland.²²

Fascists’ obsessions with purity and unity evoked the need to construct clear enemies both at home and abroad. Their radical ideas of social and racial regimentation required participation in order to achieve support. Popular acclaim for fascism was cultivated by organicist, integrative nationalism, the key components of which included an appeal to images

of violence and relentless willpower, a fawning admiration of the soldier's life, and the production of community through camaraderie. The fascists' radical nationalism, as Roger Griffin has shown in his numerous publications, sought to integrate people through a promise of rebirth and renewal. This, in turn, buoyed their particular chiliasm, which found expression in events like funeral ceremonies and was sanctified in fascism's symbols, from the flag to the uniform. The militarist, hierarchical, national community was defined both by its fanatic anti-communism and racism and by its masculine mode of socialising.

Freely incorporating oneself into the fascist ethnic community brought with it the duty to follow its dictates unconditionally—a principle that established hierarchies among members. Literary scholar Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht called this the 'paradox of mutual subordination', whereby 'instead of following those he leads, the Leader is driven by those he drives': 'According to general opinion, a true Leader must embody the Collectivity from which he emerges. He cannot be a Leader without such roots – but at the same time, he is more alone and more distant from the masses than any other individual. His solitude makes the Leader stand out, and this isolation is a condition for the charisma through which he attracts the attention and trust of a collective body'. Moreover, the political leader needs his followers to constantly affirm his extraordinary attributes and invest significance in them. This paradoxical position situated him in an at once rigid and flexible relation to his subjects, because his power and charisma were conditioned on their interaction with him, belief in him, and recognition of him.²³

Fascism's polycratic, webbed hierarchies fuelled its radicalisation, because they relied on permanent mobilisation and the charisma of leadership. Over the course of their development, all European fascisms governed through the doubled institutions of party and state. The rivalries between the two and the contamination of state bureaucracy by party forces gave rise to rather postmodern forms of organisation: personal networking, informalisation of decision-making procedures, para-institutional modes of communication and coordination. Rivalry and competition among new and old institutions churned up new energy, while the increasing employment of informal procedures for making decisions and coordinating between institutions led to faster execution of plans and, ultimately, to a permanently ongoing process of radicalisation. The fascist dictatorships symbolically valorised violence, speed, youth, and technology. Whoever was capable of acting with the most speed and

impact took the day. The fascists celebrated technological acceleration and glorified the youth as a mobile, resolute avant-garde. The motto of those intoxicated by speed and dynamism was the abolition of the old through the mobilisation of society in politics and war.²⁴

But it was not just fascism's intertwining of party and state that was structured like a web. Fascist regimes' connections with their counterparts abroad were complex and unruly, unstable, fluctuating, and poorly coordinated. Indeed, they were often established through informal channels by single individuals. Fascists' efforts to forge international networks drew not only on their shared radical anti-communism and anti-Semitism, but also on fascism's image as a new, fresh movement that offered a 'third way' between communism and capitalism. Meanwhile, Italian Fascism's corporatism attracted much interest around Europe, Latin America, and Asia, even outside fascist circles. On the whole, the fascisms maintained contact with one another, learned from one another, and transferred knowledge and practices; this was true of their leisure activities just as it was of their repressive apparatuses. These entanglements provided fertile ground for processes of radicalisation and motivated fascists to try to outdo one another.²⁵

The fascist cult of speed and youth, of national unity and ethnic purity, of community and will was run by nationalist militarists organised in large groups. They had strong connections to traditional elites, but at the same time, they pushed these elites' limits, not least of all through their drive to totally reshape their nations' cultures. Fascism combined populist mass enthusiasm with civilian law-and-order politics, normality with destruction, conservative inertia with dynamic mobilisation, and fanaticism with opportunism. The rejection of liberal society and socialist reforms was realised in authoritarian state violence, which was executed with the aim of racially 'purifying' the nation, capturing territory, and spearheading wars of extermination.

VIOLENCE AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

The values and symbols of fascism, even in its movement phase, always revolved around violent practices. The fascists stood for vitality, intransigence, the cult of youth, militarism, camaraderie, discipline, and virility. In the respective periods before they had taken power, about half of all fascists in Germany and Italy belonged to the fascist combat groups,

whose purpose was to commit acts of violence against socialists, communists, and 'Marxists' and to incite and engage in anti-Semitic, racist violence.²⁶

The fascists' 'group strategy' was based on violently 'breaking down the traditional groups of civilized society and a rapid rebuilding on the basis of an entirely new group pattern'.²⁷ Violence became the 'final principle of National Socialist social organization',²⁸ which climaxed in its 'mystical worship of "hardness" for its own sake'.²⁹ Fascist violence was an expression of a collective exertion of willpower and was valorised in a mythical fashion in order to marshal people and capture the fascists' view of themselves. Indeed, the self-transcendence and self-empowerment embodied in violent acts had religious features. In acts of violence, the fascists saw a creative life force, a manifestation of freedom, a heroic act. The doubts of critical thought were extinguished by actionism. What counted for the fascists was the immediate experience of the violent act.³⁰

Violence defined all fascist movements. Violence permeated their political actions, their symbols, propaganda, and party aesthetics, their organisation in paramilitary combat groups, their party events, and their everyday 'party work' on the street. Violence served to bolster ties within the group while it was exploited as propaganda aimed at people outside it. Through their 'power propaganda', the fascists sought to procure prestige and prove that they were no 'idle talkers'.³¹ Manifested in the production and absoluteness of hate and enmity, the cult of violence and action demonstrated intransigence and ridiculed compromise and rationality. A defining attribute of fascism was its inability to deal with political conflicts by any means other than violence. It sanctioned conflict rather than seeking to resolve it.

Nietzsche's praise of *vivere pericolosamente* was embraced and practiced by fascists like Mussolini. But the cult of death not only enraptured him and the Romanian Iron Guard, which held up as its highest principle the motto 'long live death'. It articulated in a nutshell the fascists' self-image and their belief in the value of war. In war, fascism discovered its true identity. Sigmund Neumann was the first to make this argument in his 1942 book *Permanent Revolution*, writing that fascist regimes 'are governments at war, originating in war, aiming at war, thriving on war'.³²

Fascism found its political shape in war and its radicalisation culminated in a war of extermination. It is no coincidence that fascist fantasies of total destruction became concrete in war and genocide. The means of war enabled the fascists to make into a social reality their belief that order

could be achieved through violence and annihilation, even if the organisation and mobilisation of society around the principles of war had begun long before the war itself.³³

CONCLUSION

As a violent community of action, fascism produced new experiences that were then repeated and exploited for the purpose of further mobilisation. The praxeological analysis of fascism focuses on the social efficacy and cultural meaning of specific patterns of action and behaviour. Praxeology studies how logics are embedded in concrete situations and actions.

While space restrictions make it impossible to detail here the different degrees to which fascisms became institutionalised and radicalised, doing so is a key component of praxeological research on fascism. Fascism's dynamics of radicalisation and transformation were a product of its intersecting paths, whose transnational entanglements generally consisted of a mixture of cooperation and competition. Radicalisation was a common effect of the fascist regimes' mutual influence on one another, because they often tried to one up and outdo their counterparts abroad. Such studies on how fascist movements and regimes learned from one another and related to each other have focused mainly on racism, colonialism, and war.³⁴

NOTES

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 14. See LaCapra, Dominick. 2013. The Literary, the Historical, and the Sacred, in *History, Literature, Critical Theory*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 120–147.

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Working Across Bounded Entities: Fascism, ‘Para-Fascism’, and Ideational Mobilities in Interwar Europe

Aristotle Kallis

THE ‘NEW CONSENSUS’ AND ITS CRITICS

Since its formulation in the early 1990s, Roger Griffin’s definition of fascism has been unceasingly debated, approvingly and critically. Its succinctness and simplicity—as a ‘minimum’ formula seeking to condense fascism’s ideological specificity to a cluster of key ideas (hyper-nationalism, rebirth/‘palingenesis’, and populism) have been welcomed as a conceptual advance but also criticised as essentialist and inflexible. The renewed emphasis that he placed on the centrality of ideology and culture has inspired a prolific and diverse literature on interwar fascism but has also raised strong objections that the focus on ideology has contributed to a distorted understanding of fascism divorced from its social realities.¹ Others have warned against using the definition in a canonical way to make evidence fit the conceptual norms rather than the other way round.² Meanwhile, as a formula derived from an understanding of fascism as a

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generic phenomenon that both unified and transcended diverse historical experiences, Griffin's definition has also been challenged on grounds that it has reproduced assumptions about some kind of ineliminable ideological core projected outwards from a hierarchical 'centre'—Italy, Germany or both. Finally, Griffin's 'idealised abstraction' was treated with suspicion as yet another attempt at producing a strictly classificatory model that obscured the fascinating histories of mobility and fluidity, intersection and interpenetration, between supposedly different categories, as well as of different political and social actors that shaped—less through intent than through contingency—the history of radical politics across interwar Europe.

My entry into the fray of fascism studies occurred at a time when claims about, and rebuttals of, the 'new consensus' were at their most expansive and lively. Griffin's idea of consensus was subtler than what many of his critics attacked. It amounts to the 'reformulation of an "old" consensus on the basis of the area of significant overlap between a group of rival theories which had never quite crystallized into a fully articulated common position when it should have (the early 1980s)'.³ He did not deny the existence of differences within the loose consensus group of scholars; but he saw the consensus in terms of 'convergence' towards shared methodological and programmatic ground.⁴ Over the years, my own research on different aspects on fascism has been indebted one way or another to the premises of this 'consensus'. Yet it was one rather secondary conceptual innovation of Griffin's scholarship that I found the most fascinating, namely his *para-fascism*. The term appeared halfway through *The Nature of Fascism* in response to the heuristic and classificatory problem of fascism as a regime:

When Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany are compared with the other authoritarian regimes which established themselves in Europe after 1918, a crucial difference soon emerges: namely, that none of them grew directly out of a seizure of state power by an 'extra-systemic' revolutionary movement of populist nationalism bent on creating a new national order. All of them in one way or another came to power as attempts by sections of the ruling elites or their military representatives to restore stability and strong government in a way which did not threaten the basis of the existing class structure or of traditional values. Their dynamics were thus essentially reactionary and conservative.⁵

Griffin's language marked the territory that these regimes occupied as at best peripheral to 'fascism'. This was in line with the overwhelming majority of conceptual approaches to generic fascism at the time. For example, a decade or so before the publication of Griffin's *Nature of Fascism*, Stanley Payne had expanded his analytical scope to include a wide range of right-wing 'authoritarian' movements and dictatorial regimes from the interwar period; but he was adamant that 'few of them ... have had much to do with fascist movements or the historic culture of fascism'.⁶ The need to distinguish between 'authoritarian' and 'fascist' manifestations, particularly at regime level, was understandable at the time when most anthologies of fascism published in previous decades included (and similarly excluded) national case studies of movements, parties, and regimes with little attention to conceptual subtleties. Payne's work was by all accounts pioneering, as Griffin himself recognised,⁷ not only for the refined 'typological definition' of fascism that it offered but also because it supplied the intellectual wherewithal for a conceptually sophisticated classificatory approach to 'generic' fascism that was wide-ranging, flexible, *and* discerning. Yet Payne also established these 'rightist authoritarian' case studies as a kind of murky no-man's land just beyond the borders of generic fascism—tangentially connected but bearing markedly different ideological roots and especially political ambitions.

Griffin was not the first one to venture into this irksome no-man's land extensively in his early work. By the time that *The Nature of Fascism* was published, Martin Blinkhorn had edited an important comparative volume examining the intricacies of the conservative-fascist nexus in a large number of European countries. In explaining the volume's focus on (radicalised) conservatives alongside fascists, Blinkhorn argued that, although there were clear ideological differences between the two, 'a boundary between fascists and authoritarian conservatives was never drawn with total clarity but it became more blurred with every year that passed'.⁸ But Griffin went further. In spite of calling the regimes headed by those authoritarian conservatives 'counter-revolutionary [but] ... masqueraded as revolutionary ... as a cosmetic ploy to retain hegemony, to manipulate rather than to awaken genuine populist energies,' he added:

The result has been described in such terms as ‘fascistized’, ‘fascisant’, ‘pseudo-fascist’, ‘proto-fascist’ or ‘semi-fascist’. I propose to use instead the term ‘para-fascist’, in which the prefix ‘para-’ connotes an ‘alteration, perversion, simulation’ (Oxford English Dictionary) of ‘real’ fascism as we have defined it.⁹

This lexical shift barely registered on the historiographical radar at the time but amounted to a slow-motion coup. ‘Para-fascism’ divulged both closeness and difference, not unlike the fuzziness of the authoritarian-fascist relationship that Blinkhorn’s volume had dissected. Yet the balance that Griffin sought to strike shifted semantically towards the latter. While detached as ‘counter-revolutionary’ and largely derived from opportunistic imitation, these supposedly ‘fascist’ imposters could no longer be ignored or explained away by fascism studies.

In the early 2000s, I was drawn for the first time to the opportunities offered by the semantic ambiguity of ‘para-fascism’.¹⁰ By that time, Griffin was reformulating his original definition of fascism—‘a genus of modern politics which aspires to bring about a *total revolution* in the political and social culture of a particular national or ethnic community’.¹¹ This shift—most notably the explicit inclusion of the ‘revolutionary’ benchmark—suggested a deeper qualitative fissure between fascism and para-fascism than the more elliptical wording of his original ‘concise definition’ had suggested.¹² In so doing, it reinstated some of the boundaries that ‘para-fascism’ had previously seemed willing to question or even puncture. Years later, in 2011, I revisited Griffin’s ‘para-fascism’, this time from the perspective of a comparative analysis of interwar authoritarian dictatorships. From my point of view, the supposed para-fascist underachievers that were banished in this haunted conceptual borderland between fascism and authoritarianism exemplified the half-empty glass analogy—close but short of close-enough. I wondered if we were asking the wrong question about them: What if, instead of focusing on their perceived deficits or failures, we tapped into the other half of the proverbial glass that was full? If, to put it crudely, para-fascists were *not* ‘fascist’ enough, out of choice or necessity or indeed because of a contingent mismatch between intentions and outcomes, they were nonetheless significantly *more* ‘fascist’ than the rest of the conventional conservatives and authoritarians up to that point. In this sense, Griffin’s classificatory residuum of ‘para-fascism’ also indicated a (successful) *departure* of

sections of interwar authoritarianism towards a radical post-liberal, anti-socialist, and anti-parliamentary political settlement, the primary source of inspiration for which came from the alternative represented by ‘fascism’ in Italy and Germany. Of course, it mattered that the political destination of this shift was very different—that is, less sweeping, less socially and culturally transformative, less revolutionary in ambition—than what transpired under Hitler or Mussolini. Did it matter enough, however, to shrug off the significant convergence between fascist and authoritarian rule that did take place across Europe in the 1930s? In a volume that António Costa Pinto and I co-edited in 2014, we invited scholars to negotiate precisely the same contested borderland between fascist ideology/regime and authoritarian dictatorship, seeking to making sense of the para-fascist conceptual and methodological conundrum. We concluded the volume with the plea to ‘look beyond previously assumed dichotomies and accept the challenge of embracing complexity rather than trying to force it into neat and contrived classifications’.¹³ In essence, we suggested that the para-fascist borderland, though vexing, presented fresh opportunities for a methodological and conceptual rethinking of the entire field of interwar right-wing radicalism, fascist or otherwise.

The case for a productive embrace of fluidity was of course far from new. It had already been stated provocatively in Michel Dobry’s attack on the classificatory approach to ‘generic fascism’.¹⁴ Yet the unease and dissatisfaction with ‘fascist’ conceptual models evinced by Dobry were shared to varying degrees by other scholars of interwar fascism. Kevin Passmore argued that ‘fascism theories share a weakness of models’ which ‘harden concepts that were contested and fluid in practical politics’.¹⁵ David Roberts found that models often ‘delimit their questions—and thus the range of frequencies’ that the bounded conceptual categories may capture.¹⁶ Michael Mann criticised models of generic fascism as ‘idealistic’ and seriously lacking in awareness of the deeper power relations and organisations.¹⁷ Roger Eatwell, initially a proponent of concise conceptual definitions of fascism,¹⁸ subsequently underlined the need to supplement definitions of fascist ‘minima’ with a dynamic ‘matrix’ that ‘break[s] away from a purely history of ideas approach’ by capturing a wider gamut of fascist conceptions of the individual, the nation, and the state.¹⁹ But the approach promoted by *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship* turned the spotlight on mobility, circulation, diffusion, cross-fertilisation, and hybridity as critical formative and constitutive forces in the histories of both interwar fascism and the broader spectrum of

authoritarian/radical politics. The volume's focus on 'para-fascism' may have acknowledged the particular importance and fruitfulness of studying fascism in a complex and inherently dynamic continuum of conservative and authoritarian ideas, as well as of dictatorial regime forms,²⁰ but it was also meant as a broader methodological call for an expanded—conceptual and geographic, ideational and empirical—perspective on interwar radical ideologies and politics, fascism being an integral and significant part of the equation and of the dynamics of radicalisation under scrutiny.

MOBILITY, SYNTHESIS, AND THE 'THIRD WAY'

If the historical realities of 'fascism' have continuously tested the conceptual/analytical categories that scholars have subsequently developed in their search for distinct shared patterns across a jumble of otherwise unique historical experiences, it is largely because fascism itself was the product of multiple challenges to intellectual and political bounded categories of its time. For decades after its political collapse in 1945, fascism was widely perceived as devoid of ideological substance or meaningful coherence. Griffin's contribution to fascism studies joined a distinguished lineage of scholars going back to the work of George L. Mosse²¹ and Ernst Nolte²² in the 1960s that sought to rehabilitate fascism as both ideologically distinct and fascinatingly different. It was Mosse who gave credence to the understanding of fascist ideology as rooted in a broader revolt against materialism that went back to the late stages of the nineteenth century. Zeev Sternhell charted an intellectual genealogy of fascism that led from the 'antimaterialist *revision* of Marxism' in late nineteenth-century France to its distinct *fusion* with organic nationalism and syndicalism in early twentieth-century Italy.²³ Emilio Gentile traced the journey of the early Italian revolutionary syndicalists from their original 'synthesis between nationalism and socialism' prior to 1914 to their eventual renunciation of fundamental Marxist and anarchist principles that had underpinned it in the first place when many of them joined Fascism.²⁴ Roberts detected a more layered, uncertain, and continuously developing 'nationalist-syndicalist convergence' in Italy, only partially indebted to earlier intellectual developments in France that were the mainstay of Sternhell's account.²⁵ Differences notwithstanding, this kind of intellectual genealogy of fascism pointed to unorthodox *synthesis* of disparate, even seemingly antagonistic ideas. The Italian *Doctrine of Fascism* (1932) bragged about its fierce eclecticism: having declared

victory over the other competing universal ideologies of its time, the authors claimed that '[f]rom beneath the ruins of liberal, socialist, and democratic doctrines, Fascism extracts those elements which are still vital. It preserves what may be described as "the acquired facts" of history; it rejects all else'. This was a rather accurate self-presentation of the ideological workings of Fascism in Italy.

Griffin, Eatwell, and other scholars of generic fascism have largely converged on the view of fascist ideology as the product of a 'third way' beyond left and right, socialism and liberalism. Ruth Ben Ghiat argued that it was precisely the slippery, nature of (Italian) Fascist ideology, with its numerous contradictions that established Mussolini's stato totalitario as 'forward-looking regime of possibility with a doctrine in constant evolution'.²⁶ 'Third way' ideologies voraciously mine seemingly polar and incompatible ingredients from existing sources and then seek to alchemise them into new, previously unimaginable possibilities for the future.²⁷ The 'third way' designation places fascism in distinguished company, part of a long and diverse intellectual lineage that included communitarianism, socialist revisionism and its various permutations, corporatism, and so on. Not unlike populism, 'third way' attracts a distinctly varied membership of ideas and ideologies; but its members are linked together not through any substantive ideological affinity but because they share a pragmatic strategy and mode of ideological reasoning of contesting existing bounded ideological entities.²⁸

Therefore, 'third way' indicates not just a spectrum of intermediate positions between two poles but also the pursuit of overcoming an initial assumed dichotomy.²⁹ In this crucial respect, it is the product of extraordinary ideational *mobility*, typically caused by a perceived sense of profound crisis and an assertion of transformative agency towards an alternative future.³⁰ To say that mobility is an integral part of the study of ideology is both counter-intuitive and self-evident. It is counter-intuitive because ideologies tend to be reasonably stable formations, at least closer to the core of their structure in morphological terms.³¹ Such an expectation of stability creates the impression of equilibrium between and across ideologies, at least for a significant length of time. Yet it is self-evident because the field of ideologies is in a state of constant flux because their individual components shift meaning or importance within an ideological system, new ideas emerge and existing ones become marginalised or repositioned, new clusterings/syntheses are formed and old ones become

undone or superseded, and so on. Ideological processes are by definition dynamic and volatile; they challenge boundaries and perceived stasis. Even fundamental ideological categories such as left and right or radical and mainstream, are constantly shifting, in absolute or relative terms, which means that they redefine the tensions between polar opposites and the spaces in-between them. As a result, a 'third way' designation tells us little about either the goals or the methods of an ideology, even less about its internal structure and relations among its components, core and peripheral. It is never a single point of the in-between spectrum between the previously considered as irreconcilable positions, let alone the absolute middle point between them. Very often, resulting ideological hybrids did not point to a redefined form of centrism but to novel radical alternatives.

Yet to qualify an ideology as a 'third way' phenomenon is supremely useful as an indication of its *raison d'être*. Fascism could legitimately be defined along these lines because it warped the contemporary imagined topography of established ideologies that had presented them as bounded and fixed entities with forbidding chasms separating them from one another. As mentioned earlier, processes of irreverent boundary-crossing and appropriation of seemingly incompatible ideas had already been in productive motion since the last quarter of the nineteenth century in a number of countries. National and socialist qua Sternhell,³² revolutionary and order-defending, collectivist and anti-materialist, traditionalist and futurist, romantic and technocratic, mobilising and statist, authoritarian and 'democratic',³³ interwar fascism bore the imprint of earlier ideological revisions and repositionings that paved the intellectual way for it and ended up being hosted, one way or another, under its own expansive canopy. Instability and constant oscillation between seemingly irreconcilable positions was the lynchpin of fascist revolutionary vitality according to Jeffrey Schnapp.³⁴ The result of fascism's embrace of contradiction, Schnapp claimed, was invariably the same: 'oxymoron'.³⁵ For years, historians debated the reasons behind fascism's extraordinary transgression of multiple ideological boundaries—whether it evidenced the existence of an ideological void; or it derived from an opportunistic strategy in pursuit of social appeal and political success; or it formed a process generative of fascism's revolutionary ideological architecture as doctrine-in-the-making. However disputed at the time that it was pronounced, the 'new consensus' marked the high point of a historiographical trajectory that came to view fascism's 'protean' qualities as an ideological asset for its revolutionary agency, with syncreticism modulated and its effects recombined

through the sheer centrifugal force of its regenerative core myth.³⁶ For Griffin, the ideological ‘mazeway’ was not a liability or distraction but rather a pivotal component of what made fascism ideologically distinct, revolutionary, populist, and in the end successful in the marketplace of interwar political ideologies.

Tim Cresswell has noted that ‘[m]etaphors of mobility are used to bring into question the apparent fixities of older forms of understanding’.³⁷ This statement is equally true in heuristic terms as it is in relation to how ideational mobilities operated in any given historical context. To think of fascism as the product of an extraordinary mobility in the field of ideas involves first of all an understanding of the supposedly bounded ideological entities that it challenged and transcended in practice. To do so also means questioning their supposed fixity in the first place. By the time that Mussolini broke from the Italian Socialist party to pursue a radical nationalist and militarist agenda, the broad ideological family of socialism had already splintered into revolutionary and revisionist currents, the latter now largely viewed as upshots of ‘third way’ thinking. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, socialists and liberals became divided over their responses to a number of perceived dichotomies about their view of human nature, their preferred political methods and strategies, their visions of transformation, and their understanding of the entire historical process. In itself the upshot of ideological dissent, Bernstein’s revisionism became the facilitator of a series of ideational mobilities, within and across socialism, and a spate of non-normative ideological fusions. In the interwar years, a growing number of liberals became so disaffected with the institutions of parliamentary democracy that they actively sought to replace it, strategically or otherwise, with anti-democratic, essentially authoritarian alternatives. The well-known case of Benedetto Croce’s initial endorsement of Fascism as a short-term correction to the social upheavals of the immediate post-World War I period may not have indicated an ethical endorsement of authoritarianism and violence; but it did illustrate a scenario of transgressive thinking in which political strategy could dictate more profound ideological revisions and re-syntheses that reached much deeper into the ideational core of the liberal worldview.³⁸

The fascinating ideological and political mobilities of the immediate pre- and post-World War I period extended much further than the field of radical nationalism, generating all hosts of intersections within and across familiar political spaces of the left and right alike. They were

also unintelligible without the prior forces of irreverent recombination of seeming opposites that had marked the late nineteenth century and the ‘great ideological laboratory of the Belle Époque’.³⁹ The trajectory of the Italian Nationalist Association (*Associazione Nazionalista Italiana*, ANI) from its dissident intellectual origins in the avant-garde scene of Florence at the turn of the twentieth century to its fusion into the Fascist movement in 1923 was of critical importance in Roberts’s critique of Sternhell’s genealogy of fascist ideology. Beyond this, however, it serves as yet another fascinating example of the kind of ideological crossovers, internal tensions, and political contradictions that we have become so familiar with in the study of interwar fascism. Alfredo Rocco, the nous behind the institutional edification of the Fascist state in the second half of the 1920s, was a distinguished member of the ANI who transitioned very successfully to the very top of the Fascist regime. For years he shared his political home with conservative royalists, imperialists and irredentists, a version of Sternhell’s ‘national socialists’, and people of a more moderate right-liberal persuasion.⁴⁰ In the particular ideological topography of the ANI, Rocco was definitely a radical—and obviously radical enough to play a pivotal role in the formulation of the Fascist corporatist doctrine that the regime’s ideologues presented as Fascism’s most potent, universally valid, and superior form of political and socio-economic organisation.⁴¹ But he was also part of a movement of contradictions and ‘third way’ hybrid re-syntheses already in place by the time that Mussolini’s Fascism came to the fore.⁴² Enrico Corradini, inventor of trademark neologisms such as ‘proletarian nationalism’ and ‘national democracy’, was at once a sponsor of bourgeois interests and an interlocutor with the Syndicalists.⁴³ Fascism was indeed a ‘scavenger’⁴⁴ or a ‘voracious amoeba’⁴⁵; but it was far from unique in this respect or indeed a pioneer of the trend. What is more, its own digestive system was full of devoured micro-ideological ‘third ways’ alongside ideas that had not co-existed before. Its own maze-way synthesis would have been far less intelligible, convincing or indeed feasible without them.

Griffin’s understanding of fascism was steeped in metaphors of non-normative ideational mobility and syncretism. He argued that fascism represented a ‘conservative revolution’ that was decidedly not reactionary in the conventional sense of being regressive or backward-looking.⁴⁶ He emphasised the quest for a ‘hybrid of [rooted] traditionalism and modernism’.⁴⁷ He dissected Mussolini’s welcoming stance vis-a-vis the widest range of ideological, political, and cultural currents in pursuit of a

rooted ‘revolutionary futurity’.⁴⁸ He recognised the (re)generative force of fascism’s ‘radically futural project of societal transformation no matter how anchored in a mythicized and idealized national past [it was]’.⁴⁹ ‘Hybrid’ variants too abounded in his conceptual scheme—products of “genuine identification and *synthesis* ... [that] gave rise to a new ‘syncretic’ hybrid ideational form”. Syncretic relationships were concentrated inside the ranks of any given fascist movement, in a fight of competing visions for its soul. They also extended to interactions among different fascist and more broadly hyper-nationalist groups operating in the same national context at a given moment in time. Through convergence, friction, and synthesis, these relationships produced a range of ‘fascist’ composites that shared many critical ideational components but could also be bitterly divided over a series of issues of outlook, emphasis or strategy. Finally, such relationships were at the heart of bilateral, international, and especially transnational networks of mobility of ideas and people; of mutual inspiration and interaction; of political learning and more formal collaboration.⁵⁰ This kind of relationship was then juxtaposed to a more pragmatic, interest-driven, and opportunistic ‘collusive’ alternative, in the context of which two ideological currents actively converged in pursuit of still very different, even conflicting goals without generating a deeper, enduring ideological synthesis.⁵¹ Collusive relationships have always been more challenging. They stretched well beyond the broad fascist canopy and involved more wide-ranging and unorthodox discursive, political and organisational crossovers, as well as a wider range of idiosyncratic hybrid outcomes.

Syncretic and collusive relationships were the mainstay of fascism’s histories in the 1920s and 1930s. Griffin’s conception of fascism as the product of such relationships underlines how sensitive his work has been to the dynamics of ideational movement, intersection, and synthesis (willed or unintended). More importantly, he came to this conception *not in spite of* all these movements and ensuing contradictions in fascist ideology but *because* of them. Nevertheless, in his view, the strategic, interest-driven ‘confluence’ of fascists and other disparate constituencies involved in collusive relationships was not based on the kind of genuine ideological convergence between them that characterised syncretic ones. The implication, shared by most scholars in the fray of generic fascism studies, was that the former were only tangential to the history of interwar fascism. Yet once again the not-quite-fascist residuum stretched across the dichotomy. It included a wide spectrum of motives, ranging from

‘bandwagon’ opportunism to genuine ideological and political, if conditional and selective, fascination with the way that ‘fascism’ was perceived as unfolding in discourse and action by fascists in power and opposition. It also produced instances of both confluence and (partial or strategic at least) convergence.⁵² Even if a collusive relationship maintained the ideological distance and specificity of the two contracting parties, the relationship itself involved asymmetrical shifts and compromises. Blinkhorn noted that ‘the character and conduct of many of the [interwar] authoritarian regimes ... was strongly if selectively influenced by their leaders’ and architects’ interpretation of the Italian and/or German reality’.⁵³ Strategic confluence often led to a disproportionately higher degree of ‘fascistisation’, which in essence involved the active selective adoption/adaptation of fascist norms and policy innovations without endorsing fully a revolutionary ‘fascist’ ideological vision.⁵⁴ The result was very often more than just strategic and the change not just cosmetic or opportunistic. Collusive relationships could and *did* have syncretic outcomes.

FASCISM WITHOUT FASCISTS?

So let us turn back to the hapless residuum of the not-quite-fascisms. The paradox of a sophisticated conceptual approach to generic fascism is that, in finessing the ideological core and those elements that render it distinct, it generates new tensions in the periphery—the borderlands—between what it seeks to define and what it consequently excludes. The challenge involves not simply ideas and concepts but also the way in which a multitude of very different empirical case studies map onto the new conceptual layout. Verdicts on what a perspective on fascism incorporates and excludes from the wide range of case studies, whether it is movement-based⁵⁵ or includes regimes as well⁵⁶ (in which case, which ones it chooses to include and which not, and on what grounds) invariably involve difficult and contentious decisions. To take one example, the status of the Croix de Feu—the largest French movement in the 1930s—in the histories of French and European fascism has divided historians. Much of the debate has inevitably focused on the ideological characteristics of the movement and its leader, François de La Rocque; but the broader historiographical context of this discussion remains the controversy about the marginal or not role of ‘fascism’ in interwar France, as an indigenous rather than imported ideological and political phenomenon.⁵⁷

Griffin drew his own demarcation line on the basis of a ‘shared myth of national renewal through mass-mobilisation and [the adoption of] radical policies to achieve it’ that left outside examples such as the Belgian Rex and the Irish Blueshirts because they ‘lacked the *innovative* radicalism or anti-traditionalism implicit in the rebirth myth needed to qualify as fascist’.⁵⁸

Regimes, however, raise more complicated questions. By definition, they involve another layer of translation—from idea/discourse to practice—and thus significant pressures for accommodation with existing sources of power. Paxton saw fascism’s transition from constituent to constituted power as involving a series of compromises that rendered the prospect of an ‘ideologically pure’ fascist regime practically impossible.⁵⁹ This is of course true, albeit in varying degrees, of *any* regime, for practical reasons if not for anything else. There was something uniquely unconventional, however, in the case of fascism, rooted in the idiosyncratic vision of revolution that it pursued. Griffin referred to fascism as a distinct ‘revolution from the right’—a political, spiritual, and cultural rupture with the past premised on ‘revolutionary hyper-nationalism’ that was qualitatively different from the orthodox association of revolution with the left.⁶⁰ In contrast, however, to the standard association of revolution with a radically new economic and social order erected *ex nihilo* on the ruins of the pre-revolutionary status quo, fascism wove its own revolutionary vision in deliberate, if selective, continuity with aspects of the past. Once again, the fact that no fascist regime was established on a political or institutional tabula rasa was not simply a practical or imposed concession but resulted to a large extent from fascism’s ambivalent ‘dreams of radical restoration and rupture’.⁶¹ This was after all the inherent nature of a revolution carried out in the name of nationalism: no matter how radical the transformative vision and its effects, no matter how uncompromising the revitalisation of the nation, the revolution shared semiotic content with precisely what it opposed so viscerally and sought to destroy. An absolute rupture was neither possible nor desired.

The informal bloc of not-quite-fascist/para-fascist regimes is crowded and tantalisingly diverse, blending ideological variations and distinct influences from their particular national context with the personal beliefs and aspirations of their leading figures. It is also linked to a host of other ideological and political genealogies that include the broader family of the right—conservative and radical—and authoritarianism.⁶² The standard

indictment is that these regimes, while adopting a range of external ‘fascist trappings’, never subscribed to bona fide revolutionary goals and did not seek to pursue a radical new order.⁶³ They are often accused of either imitating ‘fascist’ innovations out of their ideational context or adopting them opportunistically, cheating their way into a semblance of modernity and mass-mobilising schemes. In addition, they often deployed the fascist trappings while repressing ‘real’ fascism in their countries.⁶⁴ Neither the political background of their leaders nor the mixed ideological makeup of the regimes helped to dispel suspicions that they constituted something more than an ‘authoritarianism-plus’ political concoction—and thus not part of the normative histories of interwar fascism.

Can there be a ‘fascist’ regime without an underlying fully-formed revolutionary ‘fascist’ ideology or indeed a fascist charismatic community of mass following? This provocative question, posed in relation to the Francoist regime in Spain,⁶⁵ captures the methodological conundrum of the entire para-fascist residuum. Whether the constituency of interwar dictators, along with their intellectuals and political operators, were ‘fascist’ converts or ‘authoritarian’ mavericks matters beyond the obvious semantic slippage. In essence, it raises the mere possibility of a ‘fascism’ without ‘fascists’, contrived and administered ‘from above’—without or in many cases against—a recognisable demand or pressure ‘from below’. No matter how more flexible conceptual approaches to generic fascism have become in relation to these not-quite-fascisms, para-fascism remains ‘poised on the balance between two great ‘isms’ [and thus] is poorly reflected in international historiography’.⁶⁶ However, perhaps the question of whether all these regimes on the cusp of fascism and authoritarianism could count as ‘fascist’ or not is the less important or interesting one. What matters more is whether these highly diverse hybrid regime types could be productively integrated in a more dynamic history of interwar radicalism, alongside rather than in opposition to fascism. Put differently, were these para-fascist dictatorships—forged in the shadow of Mussolini’s and later Hitler’s success in getting to power and exposed to the ever-increasing register of implemented political and institutional radical innovations derived from them—simply importing variants of off-the-shelf ‘fascism’ or did they have a meaningful input in the history of both fascist and more broadly radical right-wing authoritarian politics in the interwar period?

There is already a predominantly political science literature on authoritarian and fascist political *diffusion* in the interwar years that has productively combined ‘fascist’ and ‘authoritarian’ regimes in the broader circulatory dynamic of radical ideas and policies that challenged liberal democratisation. Kurt Weyland in particular has engaged extensively with interwar dictatorships,⁶⁷ and has consistently argued in favour of a diffusionist analytical perspective that examines the international dynamics of autocratic collaboration.⁶⁸ His work has underlined the intimate intersections between diverse forms of radicalism but also their mutually reinforcing effects *in spite of* their ideological differences:

On the one hand, despite fascism’s innovative ideology and its enormous intellectual and political attraction, this regime type did not spread to many other countries. On the other hand, the worldwide resonance of fascism and the innumerable emulation efforts it stimulated had a very important, though complex and sometimes “contradictory”, impact in helping to cause the autocratic groundswell of the interwar years. ... [E]ven where conservative sectors did not adopt full-scale fascism, but merely borrowed certain instruments from the fascist toolkit to strengthen their authoritarian rule, this limited and partial emulation of fascism gave this reverse [autocratic] wave additional staying power.⁶⁹

According to Weyland, fascism did not ‘spread’ as a canon but put forward a matrix of new radical possibilities that, selectively and adapted, could inform other, different though politically homologous, autocratic, anti-liberal, and anti-socialist projects. It did not ‘convert’ many political agents but attracted *rational*, earnest engagement from a much wider constituency of intellectuals and political entrepreneurs. It did not ‘infect’ sympathetic conservatives but it liberated them cognitively and empowered them to revise their own authoritarian toolkit in a more radical direction.

Griffin too has recognised that the role of these not-quite-fascist dictatorial regimes should be reassessed. In a recent article, he argued that they should not be regarded as mere facades for the otherwise ‘bogus art of reactionary repression’ but ‘as serious experiments to find a modernist style of authority’.⁷⁰ On its own, this claim bestows creative radical agency on the para-fascist thinkers and political operators. In November 1923, general Miguel Primo de Rivera accompanied king Alfonso XIII to Rome, having seized power through a conventional military coup

two months earlier. His Roman sojourn was marked by effusive declarations of respect and admiration for Mussolini, some public and some anecdotal.⁷¹ Mussolini reciprocated, anointing Primo de Rivera ‘chief of Spanish Fascism’. But in one of his speeches during the visit, he made a subtle distinction: comparing the two regimes, he concluded that, while ‘the method is different in accordance with the different political climate in the two countries, the objective can be regarded as one and the same’.⁷² He also presented an essentially dichotomised view of his movement and regime: on the one hand, he described the full package as ‘a typically Italian’ formation; on the other hand, its [ideological and political] postulates were ‘of universal character’ and therefore of value for other countries. On his part, Primo de Rivera proclaimed that ‘the process of evolution or revolution has not been the same in the two countries, even if the primary causes of these processes are significantly similar’.⁷³ The Primo de Rivera dictatorship modelled much of its institutional and political development on adapted versions of tried-and-tested formulas rehearsed in Fascist Italy; but it was also openly critical of the anti-clerical tendencies of Mussolini’s movement and its ambivalent attitude to the Catholic Church—an institution of paramount significance in the primorriverista ideology of National-Catholicism.⁷⁴

Primo de Rivera was just one of the many political figures who headed para-fascist regimes in interwar Europe; but he was the first to acknowledge publicly and profusely the critical influence of ‘F[f]ascism’ in the ideology and praxis of his own regime, so soon after Mussolini’s ascension to power. Debates on the fascist or not character of his regime have been predictably polarised on either side of the familiar half-empty/half-full glass quandary.⁷⁵ If the events of October 1922 had demonstrated that ‘fascism’ could be co-opted from above without endangering the constitutional order, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera proved that ‘fascism’ could be reproduced selectively and creatively inside a more traditional conservative-authoritarian configuration—that is, without radical fascists. There was a large and receptive audience for this kind of political alchemy in interwar Europe—haunted by the spectre of crisis and decadence, desirous of an escape into a different future, terrified by socialism as both domestic and international revolutionary force, full of contempt for the liberal-parliamentary system, disdainful of traditional conservatism, and still deeply suspicious of fascism’s rebellious excess. The subsequent ‘waves’ of authoritarian transition that swept away liberal-parliamentary systems across large parts of the continent demonstrated its resonance.

Further down the line from Primo de Rivera, Antonio Salazar's Estado Novo in Portugal and Engelbert Dollfuss's Ständestaat in Austria did much more than simply accommodate fascism into an authoritarian template; they also articulated a new kind of synthesis through their new constitutional texts that went on to influence others in subsequent years. In my own research on the 4th of August dictatorship in Greece (1936–1941), I encountered strong admiration evinced by Metaxas and other leading figures of the regime for Salazar's hybrid political experiment, viewing it as a model for the radical refashioning of the new Greek state.⁷⁶ By seeking to alchemise a *non-revolutionary* hybrid of a fascist-authoritarian 'third way', these and other interwar not-quite-fascists did arguably more to facilitate the appeal and political diffusion of 'fascism' as the supposedly pure regime examples of Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany. Their hybrids served as an unfolding proof-of-concept that 'fascism-minus-revolution' could be a supremely usable political formula, addressing the aspirations and concerns of a potentially far larger international audience than that of fascist admirers. But, in addition, it served as a vehicle for 'mainstreaming' many distinct fascist ideas and policies—and, through them, of 'fascism' as a political alternative.

* * *

The history of fascism was one of challenging, transcending, and redefining bounded entities. It was the product of multiple intellectual 'third ways'; a syncretic ideology derived from unorthodox syntheses; a doctrine in-the-making that was rooted in constant radical action; a revolutionary ideology that sought rupture *and* radical continuity; a hyper-nationalist ideology predicated on supposedly universal values; an initially national force that subsequently crossed political and cultural boundaries with exceptional ease. In all these and other ways, fascism breached and on occasion re-drew all sorts of boundaries, perceived and actual. Its histories were made in and through permanent movement. Without the armoury of sophisticated conceptual tools that a distinguished line of scholars developed over time, all this movement resembled directionless chaos. That it no longer does, and that so many working in the field of fascism studies have at last shared, however conditionally, a heuristic lens, method, and a flexible language to work creatively through it in so many different directions is a testament to the interpretive utility

of conceptual models of fascism. What Griffin associated with the ‘new consensus’ represented a phase of confident maturity in fascism studies. It marked the point when new and existing—though scattered—conceptual and methodological insights from generations of scholarship could be distilled and synthesised into a sophisticated yet flexible framework for analysis. A milestone rather than a terminus of stasis, the ‘new consensus’ represented also the beginning of new possibilities. Since its formulation, this line of scholarship has embraced a host of new directions. It has engaged with new methods and areas of analysis. It has also refined existing assumptions and introduced new perspectives—not least the focus on an ever-growing array of transnational exchanges. The transnational approach is in itself suggestive of the growing recognition that movement and fluidity shaped the histories of fascism—and of the wider field of radical ideas, politics, and culture, in which fascism was located in the first place. Mobility remains a supremely promising framework for the study of fascism, fitting its conceptual syncretism and protean nature, its geographic diffusion, and its universal ‘missionary’ outlook. One day it may also produce better routes to navigate those still challenging borderlands between fascism and authoritarianism that Griffin’s ‘para-fascism’ valiantly sought to map.

NOTES

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Neo-Fascism: A Footnote to the Fascist Epoch?

Nigel Copsey

Every fresh act of neo-fascist violence, every event designed to stir up memories of the fascist epoch, every reference to ethnic cultures as organic entities with their own political rights and destinies, is a reminder of the need for the human sciences not to close the file on neo-fascism or treat it as footnote to the fascist epoch. (*Roger Griffin, Fascism*, 2018: p. 125)

THREE TRENDS IN THE EVOLUTION OF NEO-FASCISM

When reviewing the 626-page *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (2009), Roger Griffin lamented that the question of ‘how the revolutionary right has metamorphosed itself in the post-war, post-Soviet or “post-fascist” age’, rather than featuring as a principal theme of the book, was ‘tucked away inconspicuously in a concluding section’. While Anna Cento Bull’s chapter on neo-fascism ensured that the book at least ended on ‘a high note’,¹ its solitary nature reflected the prevailing tendency among historians of the ‘fascist epoch’ to dismiss post-war articulations as insignificant

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residues or not even instances of 'fascism' at all. As I have elaborated elsewhere, those historians who hesitate, or recoil, from embracing the term 'neo-fascism' have been joined by *presentist* political scientists who, eager to draw attention to the 'novelty' of contemporary radical-right populism, maintain that today's radical-right populists are truly distinct from the 'Old Fascist Right'.² Cas Mudde, doyen of radical right-wing populist studies, singled out the Marxist tradition for deliberately misusing (or abusing) the term 'neo-fascism' in order to 'prove' historical continuity when there was none.³

Roger Griffin is no Marxist, of course. Approaching his subject from a place of *methodological empathy*, Griffin's claim, which I find impossible to resist, is that fascism exists beyond 1945, that it has experienced mutation, and that 'neo-fascism' is an important heuristic tool that helps us conceptualise the myriad of post-war fascism's outward adaptations while leaving its mythic core of revolutionary ultra-nationalist rebirth intact. Remove this mythic core and fascism becomes something else; retain it, and it remains fascist. This, as Roger Griffin said, 'is simply an approach to fascism that accommodates radical variations in fascism's outward organizational form and policies while postulating a constant ideological core'.⁴

It was in *The Nature of Fascism* (1991) that Griffin would make his first important intervention into the conceptualisation of post-war fascism. While this early foray into the subject was imperfect in some respects, he was careful to confine neo-fascism's application only to those phenomena that offered 'something new with respect to inter-war phenomena' and not to those 'attempting to resuscitate an earlier movement', i.e. neo-Nazism.⁵ Neo-fascism was thus conceptualised as the 'parent concept' giving birth to a wide range of progeny.⁶ The idea that neo-fascists could bestow their characteristics on such a wide range of progeny did draw its critics, however. None more so than A. James Gregor who misrepresents Griffin's method as the suggestion that 'we can expect neofascism to appear in any and all forms, without the semblance of ideological continuity with its historical antecedents, in totally unpredictable manifestations'.⁷

This is not the place to dwell on these exchanges. Nor will I be drawn into a forensic examination of neo-fascism in all its diversity. My concern here is less ambitious: to isolate *three* major trends in the evolution of neo-fascism: *de-territorialisation*, *meta-politicisation*, and *historical revisionism*. My aim is to establish their respective significance as *neoteric*

signature traits. In the brief chapter that follows, I will explain why, like Griffin, I refuse to close the file on neo-fascism or relegate it to a mere historical footnote. On this point, I might not be Roger Griffin's 'comrade' but I am proud to identify myself a 'brother in arms'. Let us defer to him, because the essential thing, the *sine qua non*, is that 'far from fading away to insignificance, fascism has displayed a vigorous Darwinian capacity for creative mutation'.⁸

THE BIRTH OF 'NEO-FASCISM' (WITH A CAPITAL F)

Returning to his review of *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, Griffin also took inconsistency in the capitalisation of Fascism (in Italy) and fascism (the generic term) to task. This inconsistency was, he thought, symptomatic of the book's 'conceptual malaise'.⁹ Needless to say, the term 'neo-fascism', a compound term, is also randomly capitalised. Likewise, neo-fascism suffers from its conceptual shortcomings too. If A. James Gregor is to be believed, the search for neo-fascism having 'fallen on hard times' is now in crisis. Gregor, dismissive of neo-fascism's inherently protean quality, counsels us to use historical understandings of *Italian Fascism* as our conceptual starting point for identifying contemporary forms of neo-fascism.¹⁰ So let us, for a moment, heed that advice.

Like Fascism, the proper noun 'neo-Fascism' (with a capital F) pre-dates its use in generic form. The term 'neo-Fascism' was originally applied exclusively to developments on the Italian peninsula where it is commonly assumed that the term did not circulate until after World War II, and only then after diehard veterans of the *Repubblica di Salò* (or, RSI—Italian Social Republic) had founded the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI—the Italian Social Movement) in December 1946. Thereafter, with the formal founding of a party committed to upholding 'themes dear to historical Fascism', the term 'neo-Fascism' became synonymous with the MSI. Yet as early as August 1943, Italian refugee scholar, Paulo Milano, had warned of the emergence of 'neo-Fascism' in connection with the potential division of Italy into a Nazi-occupied North and a 'clerico-Fascist zone' ruled under Badoglio in the South.¹¹ In late 1945, over a year before the MSI formed, early indications of a 'neo-Fascist' reaction in Italy started drawing international press comment. The focus of the concern was not the MSI but an organisation known as *L'Uomo Qualunque* (the Common Man), suspected of harbouring Mussolini sympathisers.¹²

At this formative stage in its etymology, ‘neo-Fascism’ was simply an appellation, a label applied to Fascist-inspired political groups in immediate post-war Italy. In essence, neo-Fascism was regarded a movement of *nostalgia* and *nostalgics* (consisting of those recidivists who lived through Italian Fascism, maintained a loyalty to it, and who sought to revive it). This notion, let us agree, is much too simplistic. There were certainly some, especially in the immediate post-war period, who were nostalgic, wistfully aspiring to a Fascist restoration. However, there were others, more radical and reflective, who, while taking inspiration from interwar Fascism, looked to adapt their Fascism to the hostile post-war context.

If many post-war fascists remained set in their nostalgic ways, many others held, as Anna Cento Bull said, ‘radical and uncompromising views, emphasizing the revolutionary nature of fascism rather than its more “reassuring” nationalist or statist version’. This reflected (in part) the ‘long-standing distinction between fascism as a movement and fascism as regime’.¹³ It was, of course, the Italian historian Renzo De Felice, who had famously drawn the distinction between (revolutionary) Fascism as movement and (conservative-authoritarian) Fascism as regime.¹⁴ Elsewhere, Italian far-right intellectual, Julius Evola, also distinguished two Fascisms: the first was the classic form of *Il Ventennio* (‘The Twenty Years’) 1922–1943; the second was the ‘Fascism of the Social Republic’ 1943–1945. The former was monarchical, a diarchy (of the *Duce* and the Crown), the latter a republican Fascism, more sympathetic to the ‘social’, giving ideological expression to a tendency present in Fascism before the March on Rome and which re-emerged in Salò in 1943.¹⁵ This differentiation is important because the MSI would project itself as ‘more the ideological heir of Salò than of the *ventennio*’.¹⁶

Might we therefore designate the ‘second Fascism’ of the Social Republic, the original ‘neo-Fascism’? Before answering this question, let us first acknowledge a forgotten ‘clandestine’ Fascism in the Allied-occupied zone in the South. As Andrea Mammone has previously shown, Fascists unable to make it to the Salò Republic formed a ‘counter-resistance’ of subversive terrorist cells. Taking inspiration from the ‘radicalism’ and ‘mysticism’ of the RSI—the most recent incarnation of Fascism—these ‘warrior’ Fascists, who refused to accept the inevitability of their defeat, were the first to actively seek the ‘renewal’ of Fascism within their immediate ‘post-Fascist’ world.¹⁷

Yet even though they took their inspiration from it, the ‘messy reality’ was that the Social Republic was a ‘convoluted’ Fascist revival from

the very start. In his incisive study of the Social Republic, H. James Burgwyn has revealed the existence of a ‘dual-track Fascism’ within the RSI. One track was comprised of conservative moderates, who sought continuity with the *ventennio*; the other, radicals, ‘the “new men” of the RSI’ who ‘demanded a social revolution from below that would purge the time servers and social climbers in the elephantine state bureaucracy, who had corrupted the original revolutionary spirit of the Fascist movement’.¹⁸ Given that there was much ‘criss-crossing’ and ‘overlapping’ between tendencies, Burgwyn maintains that ‘neo-Fascism, new Fascism, or renovated Fascism’ did not ‘clearly define lines among RSI supporters’.¹⁹

The *mélange* was all too evident at the first Republican Fascist Party Congress in November 1943, which published the “Manifesto of Verona”. Often taken as a statement of radical Fascist intent, this manifesto was by no means as radical as thought. Admittedly it called for ‘the abolition of the internal capitalist system’, but it offered to guarantee private property and envisaged private enterprise, albeit subject to worker-management collaboration and profit sharing.²⁰ If radicals heralded this manifesto as a return to the original ‘Fascist socialism’ of 1919, what Mussolini saw in *socializzazione*—tellingly Mussolini was not even present at the Congress—was more pragmatic. It was, for him, less about ideological renewal than about ending party factionalism and winning over the working class in northern Italy.

If there was a phase when we can meaningfully talk about the RSI as a ‘neo-Fascist’ regime, then it is from mid-1944 onwards (so, counter-intuitively, *before* 1945). The year 1944 does mark a seminal moment in Italian Fascism’s ideological trajectory. As Burgwyn writes, ‘with Italian power seriously on the wane, he [Mussolini] was prepared to revise his mission by joining Hitler in assembling European Fascists to be the Continent’s chosen warriors under one ideological streamer’. Mussolini now wedded the Italian nation to the Nazi crusade in Europe, to save ‘European civilization’ from the Bolshevik/Jewish enemy. In December 1944, Mussolini called on Italians ‘to welcome the constitution of a European community as a prerequisite for adhesion to the New Order as an essential condition for the alliance with the Third Reich’.²¹ As the war neared its end, spurred on by the radical Alessandro Pavolini and the violent fervour of his *Brigate Nere* (Black Brigades), Italian Fascism ultimately transformed itself into *nazifascismo*—a ‘neo-Fascism’ (with a capital F)—desperately clinging to the dystopian vision of a Nazi-Fascist ‘New European Order’.

PAN-EUROPEANISM: THE BIRTH OF (LOWER-CASE) NEO-FASCISM

Significantly, this *Europeanisation* of fascism—present though underdeveloped in the fascism of the interwar period²²—forms the basis of the recent claim made by French scholars Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg that neo-fascism first came into existence in 1942. This, they argue, was the moment when the ‘Third Reich decided to reorient its propaganda along a Europeanist axis [and] Europe became both the myth and utopia of the Fascists’.²³ According to this reading, the Third Reich is the *source* of neo-fascism.

For sure, there were different Nazi blueprints for Europe’s future. The German minister of foreign affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, called for a European confederation in March 1943 for example, but Hitler did not commit, and even after Stalingrad, there was still much reluctance to let ‘Europe’ assume primacy. In the wake of defeat at Stalingrad, the Nazi regime’s propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, insisted in his famous ‘Total War’ speech at the Berlin *Sportpalast* on 18 February 1943, that ‘When this war began, we directed our vision solely and exclusively to the *nation*. Whatever serves it and its struggle for existence is *good* and must be *sustained* and *nurtured*’.²⁴ Robert Ley wrote in early 1943 that ‘Germany stood at the turning point in its history and understood: Stalingrad is not the beginning of the German collapse, but the beginning of the unfolding of all the moral and spiritual forces of the German nation’.²⁵ In Hitler’s mind, the New European Order was the ‘Greater Germanic Reich of the German Nation’ (*Grossgermanisches Reich der Deutscher Nation*). What this involved was expansion of the territory of the racial community while the rest of Europe would be subjugated politically and economically to the German *Shicksalsgemeinschaft* (Community of Destiny). This was a Greater Germanic Empire, not some European union of self-governing states, even under German hegemony.

If neo-fascism was born during World War II, its place of origin was not so much Berlin (or should we say Germania?), the capital of this Greater Germanic Reich, but on the Eastern Front itself. For Ernesto Massi, vice secretary of the MSI (1948–1952), the origins of the fascist ‘European Community’ lay specifically in the anti-Bolshevik struggle on the Eastern Front.²⁶ Romanticised (and propagandised) as the historic moment when Europe’s fascists entered a mystical communion of blood and spirit in defence of ‘European civilisation’, this ‘spiritual’ union of Europe’s fascists

supposedly took place in the Waffen-SS (more than 50 per cent of those listed in the Waffen-SS were allegedly non-Germans). The Waffen-SS projected itself as a pan-European brotherhood, the nucleus of a first European army. Evidently, not only did many believe that the Nazis were saving Europe from Bolshevism but many also ‘managed to persuade themselves that the Nazis were leading a European social revolution that would guarantee a place in the sun to all the faithful, irrespective of their nationalities’.²⁷

Casting their eyes across the ruins of the European continent in 1945, confronted by the unmitigated disaster of military defeat, and the atrocities of Nazi genocide, fascists had to face-up to a stark post-war reality: narrow ultra-nationalist fascism, as embodied in the ‘totalitarian’ dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini, had been utterly discredited. Some recidivists remained in denial; others looked to rejuvenate their fascism, reconfiguring it to the new post-war geopolitical context in which an Iron Curtain now divided Europe. During the late 1940s, radicals within the MSI, the most significant neo-fascist party in Western Europe, drove the process of ideological renewal forward. However, it was never an exclusively Italian endeavour: a diverse group of transnational ideologues contributed. Oswald Mosley and Francis Parker Yockey from the English-speaking world; Julius Evola and Maurice Bardèche from the Latin-speaking world; and from Sweden, Per Engdahl. This transnational enterprise culminated in the Malmö International of May 1951, which spawned the European Social Movement (ESM).

In bringing their fascist doctrine in from the cold, the strategy of the ESM was essentially to *de-territorialise* it (as Mussolini had done in 1944). This ‘de-territorialisation’ involved recalibrating narrow fascist nationalism into a form of pan-European nationalism.²⁸ The aim of this European Revolution, the ESM said, ‘will be the spiritual regeneration of man, society and the State’.²⁹ ‘What counts’, wrote Evola in his *Orientations* (1950) ‘is not coming from the same land or speaking the same language, but sharing the same idea’.³⁰ This ‘superior idea’—Mosley called it ‘Europe a Nation’—retained the core myth of revolutionary ultra-nationalist rebirth (and so remained fascist), but now transposed it on to the ‘higher-level’ of pan-European rebirth (a neo-fascist adaptation). Mosley would speak grandiloquently of a ‘European Renaissance’ that would ‘transcend the past and surpass itself in the resolution of a great people to live greatly in Europe a Nation’.³¹ This did not mean that ultra-nationalism had somehow disappeared from the mythic core.

‘The apparent contradiction’, writes Jeffrey Bale, ‘is resolved if one recognizes that neo-fascist internationalism represented an *extension* rather than a rejection of radical nationalism, an attempt to transplant romantic radical nationalism onto the European plane’.³² Put simply, neo-fascists recast their ultra-nationalism into a form of romantic European ‘super-nationalism’. Perhaps this was why Julius Evola would refer to himself as ‘*superfascisti*’.

This ‘super-nationalism’ was the alternative ‘Euro-fascist’ vision that first *defined* neo-fascism. From the ruins of 1945, a new Europe would be reborn, fully united and liberated from the capitalism of Wall Street, and the communism of Moscow. ‘Neither Wall Street nor Moscow’, a ‘third force’ between the American and Soviet blocs. This ‘third force’ also projected itself as a revolutionary ‘Third Way’, the antithesis to the twin ‘materialistic evils’ of global capitalism and communism. In Italy, it involved a promise to return to the ‘socialistic’ and ‘anti-bourgeois’ Fascism of the Social Republic and pre-1922 Fascism; in Germany it took the form of ‘Nazi-left’ ‘Strasserism’ (a black beret-clad Otto having returned to Germany in 1955). In due course, this variant would develop into what would become more widely known as the ‘Third Position’.³³

There were, of course, practical reasons for such pan-Europeanist adaptations. In the first place, one nation, Germany, had not been strong enough to conquer and enforce ‘European unity’; secondly, Europe was now divided and in spatial terms had become smaller; and thirdly, the fascist ranks within their own national contexts were now so heavily depleted and vulnerable that their international consolidation made perfect sense. However, some obvious ‘bones of contention’ remained. The most significant related to the place of biological racism, reflecting the ‘historical division’ between Fascism and Nazism. Dyed-in-the-wool neo-Nazis quickly established their own rival ‘International’, the New European Order in Zürich in September 1951. Meanwhile, the MSI came under the control of ‘realists’ who now began to roll back on the ESM. The MSI signed an electoral pact with the Monarchists; it increasingly aligned itself with Cold War anti-communism, even embracing the NATO alliance. Struggling to secure organisational integrity, the final ESM conference took place in 1958.

Yet even after the ESM had withered on the vine, this neo-fascist pan-Europeanist vision stubbornly refused to die. There were ill-fated attempts to give it new organisational life—the National Party of Europe in 1962, for example, which proclaimed ‘That Europe a Nation shall

forthwith be made a fact'.³⁴ This palingenetic vision of a Europe reborn was also capable of sustaining a series of publications. One such publication was *Nation Europa*, a monthly magazine that remarkably continued its run through to the twenty-first century. Another was *Europe-Action*, which envisaged Europe's rebirth more along racial than geopolitical lines. Though far more short-lived (1963–1966) than *Nation Europa*, its significance is that it featured Alain de Benoist (b. 1943) as one of its contributors (under the pseudonym Fabrice Laroche). After 1968, De Benoist would offer his own permutation of 'European nationalism' as the 'ideologue-in-chief' of what would become a far more influential pan-Europeanist neo-fascist strand—the *Nouvelle Droite*/European New Right (ENR).

NEO-FASCISM AND THE META-POLITICAL

Through the crisis-ridden interwar years, as Griffin explains, 'an outstanding feature of Fascism and Nazism which fascist organizers elsewhere attempted to emulate was that they were able to take over the state as a new type of force in modern politics which combined four components: an electoral party, a paramilitary army, a mass social movement, and an effervescent ideological discourse'. After 1945, the context had fundamentally changed. Now, 'a post-war political climate inclement towards all "extremisms" precluded fascism from attracting anywhere in the world a mass following of sufficient size, momentum, and gravitational pull to bind these four components together under a charismatic leader in a way which had been only possible in the exceptional circumstances of the 1920s and 1930s'.³⁵ Confronted with this hostile climate, some neo-fascists adjusted to it by adopting an alternative *modus operandi*, in what Roger Griffin calls, a process of 'pervasive meta-politicisation'.³⁶

What did this actually entail? 'Certainly not a different way of doing politics', De Benoist has written, 'The issue of metapolitics was born out of a consciousness of the role of ideas in history and out of the conviction that any type of intellectual, cultural, doctrinal and ideological work must be prerequisite of any form of (political) action'.³⁷ In other words, a Gramscian-style counter-hegemonic struggle designed to capture cultural power ('cultural hegemony') as precursor to political power. 'To sum it up with a simple formula', De Benoist said, 'the Enlightenment was born before the French Revolution, but the French Revolution would not have been possible without the Enlightenment'.³⁸

The *Nouvelle Droite* (ND)/European New Right dates back to 1968 when GRECE (the Research Group for the Study of European Civilisation) was born. De Benoist maintains that the ENR ‘never claimed any predecessors’.³⁹ While this may be true *sensu stricto*, its members (including De Benoist) had been active in neo-fascist groups in the 1960s; and considerable use was made of ideas elaborated by thinkers of the Weimar-era Conservative Revolution, which would, as Tamir Bar-On points out, provide ‘a veritable treasure-trove of ideas for the Nazi regime’.⁴⁰ Perhaps most tellingly, the idea of a spiritual pan-European rebirth loomed large. As De Benoist admits, ‘The ENR, however, has never lost sight of its main reference: Europe’.⁴¹

When it comes to my own research, I have been particularly interested in probing the relationship between this meta-political form of neo-fascism and radical-right populism. Following the lead of Griffin (and others) who have acknowledged that the ND/ENR has had demonstrable effects on the extreme right, I have recently emphasised the role of the ND/ENR as the ‘missing link’ between neo-fascism and radical right-wing populism.⁴² This connection, which assumes different forms, primarily relates to its *discursive* effects (but not in the manner, that one would expect, given the emphasis placed on a pan-European vision of spiritual regeneration). Rather, radical right-wing populists, wedded to exclusivist notions of the nation state, embraced the ND/ENR’s discourse of ‘ethno-pluralism’ and ‘right to difference’ instead.

What is significant here is the way in which the ENR came to disavow the Nazi racial *Weltanschauung*:

[...] racism is a theory which postulates that there are qualitative inequalities between the races as either “superior” or “inferior”; that an individual’s value is deduced entirely from the race to which he belongs; or, that race constitutes the central determining factor in human history. These three postulates may be held together or separately. All three are false.⁴³

The ENR declared (spuriously) that rather than being racist, it subscribed to ‘a universalist and a differentialist anti-racism’, which ‘holds that the irreducible plurality of the human species constitutes a veritable treasure’, and should be defended.⁴⁴ This recognition of difference, the claim that every people has a ‘*droit à la différence*’ turned the discourse of the anti-racist left on its head by insisting that all people had a right to preserve their own ethno-cultural identity and that to deny them such a right was

‘racist’. This ethno-pluralist *doublespeak* has become a central trope in radical right-wing populism, used instrumentally to circumvent the stigma of racism, allowing far-right political parties to build ‘reputational shields’ that can fend off accusations of racism and extremism. Some far-right parties have been more successful in this quest than others. The British National Party’s quest, a case which I have examined very closely using Roger Griffin’s paradigm, came unstuck in 2010 and ultimately exhausted its possibilities.⁴⁵

NEO-FASCISM AND REHABILITATING THE FASCIST PAST

An obvious need to rehabilitate the fascist past leads me to a third signature trend of neo-fascism: *historical revisionism*. As Roger Griffin said in *The Nature of Fascism*,

[i]n view of the body blow dealt to the credibility and ‘image’ of fascism in general and by the crimes of humanity perpetrated in the name of the Nazi New Order, the conscious minimization, relativization or juggling away of those crimes plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation of palingenetic ultra-nationalism in general.⁴⁶

While we tend to associate historical revisionism with the slew of reprehensible texts that appeared in the 1970s, such as *Did Six Million Really Die?* (1974); *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (1976); and *Debunking the Genocide Myth* (1978), it is surely significant that neo-fascist ideologues helped prepare ground for Holocaust denial (even if their successors did not openly appreciate their contribution).

First, let us consider Maurice Bardèche. As Ian R. Barnes said, he ‘passed on a methodology for Holocaust denial which is rarely, if at all, acknowledged by his more immoderate successors in this genre’.⁴⁷ In 1948, Bardèche published his *Nuremberg ou la Terre Promise* (Nuremberg or the Promised Land):

It is not true that Germany is responsible for this war: the responsibility of the warmongers in England and France is at least as heavy as the responsibility of Hitler. It is not true that the National-Socialist Party was a criminal conspiracy: it was a party of militants similar to other parties of militants in power, it was obliged to resort to force to defend its work and its effectiveness, as in dramatic circumstances all parties do which believe themselves to be in charge of the future of a great mission. It is not true that the Germans

were “monsters”: the nations which did not hesitate to buy their victory with the lives of 2,650,000 German civilians, that is, with 2,650,000 lives of German workmen, old men, women and children, do not have the right to direct this reproach at them.⁴⁸

Bardèche would also give space in his journal, *Defense de l'Occident* (1952–1982), to Holocaust revisionists, such as Paul Rassinier, who in his book, *Le Drame des Juifs Européens* (1964) (The Drama of the European Jews), held the ‘Zionist establishment’ responsible for ‘concocting’ the accusation that the Nazis committed genocide using gas chambers. Significantly, Bardèche’s journal, as Barnes points out, became a ‘hot-house’ for many young neo-fascists, including François Duprat. Dubbed the ‘*l’homme qui inventa le Front National*’ (‘the man who invented the National Front’[FN]),⁴⁹ Duprat was a leading figure in the FN in the 1970s. A close confidante of Jean-Marie Le Pen, Duprat was credited with encouraging the FN to adopt a more explicit anti-immigrant discourse in 1977, and for publicising the works of Rassinier and other historical revisionists.⁵⁰

In Britain, when pressed about the ‘gas ovens’ at the founding conference of his Union Movement in November 1947, Oswald Mosley responded by declaring that the gas ovens were only used to cremate the bodies of Typhus victims. His party newspaper dismissed accounts of Jewish suffering as ‘concentration camp fairy tales’. Mosley would soon become ‘obsessed by the need to expunge the Holocaust from memory’ as Graham Macklin’s study of the post-war resurrection of British fascism records.⁵¹

Francis Parker Yockey was no stranger to historical revisionism either. In his *Imperium* (1948), he wrote:

The propaganda announced that 6,000,000 members of the Jewish Culture-Nation-State-Church-People-Race had been killed in European camps [...] The propaganda was on a world-wide scale, and was of a mendacity that was perhaps adapted to a uniformed mass, but simply disgusting to discriminating Europeans. The propaganda was technically quite complete [...] “Gas-chambers” that did not exist were photographed, and a “gasmobile” was invented to titillate the mechanically minded.⁵²

What about Julius Evola? According to Paul Furlong, Evola was ambivalent:

‘His failure to speak clearly on the Holocaust, still less to acknowledge the responsibility of regimes with which he was associated, is an extraordinary and in my view fatal lapse that by itself ought to be enough to destroy his authority’.⁵³

Whilst not necessarily denying the ‘horrors’, Evola was unconvinced that they merited a unique and unprecedented case: ‘No one talks about the cruelties committed by the “chosen people” during the conquest of the “promised land”’.⁵⁴ He then went on to make the extraordinary claim that:

[...] no price would have been too high to pay if a different outcome of the Second World War, that is, the victory of the Tripartite Pact, the Axis, had had the following consequences: breaking the back of Soviet power, probably liberating Russia from Communism and preserving all of eastern Europe from its domination; humiliating England and expelling the United States from European, if not global, politics [...] in the climate of the ‘New Order’ various colonies would have probably changed patron, but there would have been men with a steady pulse to defend European prestige and block the rising of the peoples of colour [...].⁵⁵

As for Per Engdahl, as Conny Mithander has revealed, it was case of invoking spurious moral relativism—a ‘soft’ revisionist position. For Engdahl, the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal constituted a ‘crime against humanity’, and as a result, the guilt of each side had now been ‘cancelled out’.⁵⁶ In Engdahl’s mind, European unification against Communism would be impossible without accepting moral equivalency. Writing in his book *Vasterlandets Förnyelse* (1951) (Regeneration of the West), a key ideological reference point for the ESM, Engdahl declared that ‘The Nazis initiated a vendetta against their enemies in the prisons and concentration camps. Now the democrats have done the same. Now the parties are equal’.⁵⁷

SOME CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

If early neo-fascist ideologues were pioneers of revisionism, neo-Nazis, desperate to rehabilitate Hitler and the Third Reich, are the ones that typically peddle the ‘harder’ forms—the kind that declare the Holocaust a ‘gigantic hoax’.⁵⁸ This brings me to some final thoughts on

the conceptual relationship between neo-fascism and neo-Nazism. The latter has been recently subject to an expansive conceptualisation by Paul Jackson, who argues that the neo-Nazism vision constitutes ‘a single worldview that is understood as a continuation of Nazi ideals, developed by Hitler, the NSDAP and its related organizations’.⁵⁹ In other words, neo-Nazism essentially represents, what Roger Griffin had said, an attempt to resuscitate an earlier movement.

More recently, Griffin has written that, ‘once the war generation passed, neo-Nazism was to become an outlet for adolescent discontent and angst, disaffected youths embracing its racial creed and insignia to express their rejection of multiculturalism, mass immigration and “the system”, rather than in a serious display of revolutionary commitment to a new nationalist order’.⁶⁰ So consider (neo-Nazi) skinheads (or ‘boneheads’) putting the boot in, and this seems far removed from the neo-fascist intellectuals of the ENR. This is not to say that the neo-Nazi movement does not evolve, adapt, or attract those seriously committed to the Nazi worldview. Take the self-styled ‘elite’ of National Action in Britain, for example, which described its clientele as ‘clean, intelligent, and ambitious people typically in their late teens or twenties’.⁶¹ Adopting a highly aestheticised look, dressed in the Russian clothing brand White Rex, this group came across as new, exciting, cutting edge. Even so, they were still neo-Nazis, as Mark Hayes succinctly put it, ‘without question, fanatical exponents of the classical paradigm of Nazism, as outlined by Adolf Hitler’.⁶² For purposes of terminological precision, let us retain the term neo-Nazism for those post-war fascist groups that seek to specifically revive, or resuscitate the ideology of Nazism.

Fascism did not die in 1945; the reality is that it never left us. It braved the opprobrium of immediate post-war years, recalibrated, and survives to this day. As we have seen, the post-war reinvention of fascism *qua* neo-fascism involved three significant adaptations: *de-territorialisation*, *meta-politicisation*, and *historical revisionism*. This is not to say that there have not been other prominent features that have become part of the neo-fascist repertoire, such as calls to political violence (think the ‘Strategy of Tension’ in Italy *before* Breivik); or *groupuscularity*, where small and largely discrete grouplets form nodes in a much larger network. Admittedly, this network has been ‘supercharged’ by the power of the Internet, but political violence and *groupuscularity* were features of interwar fascist milieus too. For that reason, I am less confident that they define neo-fascism.

In this short chapter, I have clarified my position on ‘neo-Fascism’ (with a capital F) and generic neo-fascism in the lower-case. In an era where radical right-wing populist parties and movements have experienced alarming surges in popular support, it is even more important for us to step back, reflect, and take the long view. While neo-fascism is not radical right-wing populism, doctrines such as ethno-pluralism, first elaborated by the intellectual strand of neo-fascism, continue to inform the ideological cosmology of the broader far right: the Identitarian Movement and Alternative Right (Alt-Right) being just two of the most recent examples.⁶³

Moreover, the urge to rewrite history also features in radical right-wing populist repertoires. During the presidential election in 2017, for example, Marine Le Pen denied that France had been complicit in the deportation of thousands of Jews to Nazi death camps. Across the border, Björn Höcke of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) made a pledge to ‘rewrite the history books’. He insisted that Berlin’s memorial to the victims of the Holocaust was a ‘memorial of shame’. In 2018, on the anniversary of Mussolini’s death, Italy’s former deputy PM, right-wing populist Matteo Salvini, tweeted: ‘many enemies; much honour’, (deliberately?) conjuring up one of Mussolini’s sayings, *‘Molti nemici, molto onore’*.

These examples serve to underscore my essential point that there is a pressing need for much greater sensitivity to the heuristic value of neo-fascism. As historians of fascism, we should encourage our colleagues across the human sciences to give greater recognition to this concept: neo-fascism is a phenomenon distinguishable from, and yet at its core, generically the same as historical fascism, which although marginalised in party-political form, continues to exert its (malign) influence on contemporary radical-right populism as well as the wider extreme-right milieu. Obviously, we need to be careful here, we should not make too much of the popular ‘resurgence’ or ‘rise’ of fascism; wild scaremongering rarely benefits anyone (except those craving sensationalist headlines, perhaps). Yet surely, as Roger Griffin is right to implore, any notion that neo-fascism is a mere footnote to interwar fascism, or that we should close the file on it altogether, should be dismissed, completely, and irrevocably.

NOTES

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4. Griffin, Roger. 2006. ‘*Da capo, con meno brio*’: Towards a More Useful Conceptualization of Generic Fascism. In *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right*, ed. R. Griffin, W. Loh, and A. Umland, 250, Stuttgart: Ibidem.
5. Griffin, Roger. 1991. *The Nature of Fascism*, London: Routledge, 166.
6. Griffin originally identified four neo-fascist sub-types: ‘Revolutionary nationalists’; ‘Crypto-fascists’; ‘Revisionists’ and ‘Conservative Revolutionaries’, see Griffin, *Nature of Fascism*, 166–9.
7. Gregor, A. James. 2006. *The Search for Neofascism: The Use and Abuse of Social Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 28.
8. Griffin, Roger. 2006. Fascism’s New Faces (and New Facelessness) in the “Post-Fascist” Epoch’. In *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right*, ed. R. Griffin, W. Loh, and A. Umland, 56, Stuttgart: Ibidem.
9. Griffin, review of Bosworth (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, 1538.
10. Gregor, *Search for Neofascism*, 29.
11. See Fears About Allied Policy, *Manchester Guardian*, 3 August 1943, 6.
12. See Rise of Neo-Fascism Causes Alarm in Italy, *The Observer*, 25 November 1945, 5.
13. Cento Bull, Anna. 2010. Neo-Fascism. In *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. Richard J.B. Bosworth, 586, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
14. See De Felice, Renzo. 2007. *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to Its Theory and Practice*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
15. See Evola, Julius. 2013. *Fascism Viewed from the Right*, London: Arktos.
16. Burgwyn, H. James. 2018. *Mussolini and the Salò Republic: The Failure of a Puppet Regime*, Cham: Palgrave, 331.
17. See Mammone, Andrea. 2007. The Black-Shirt Resistance: Clandestine Fascism in Italy. 1943–1950, *Italianist* 27/2: 282–303.

18. Burgwyn, *Mussolini and the Salò Republic*, 37.
19. Ibid., 39.
20. See The Manifesto of Verona (1943). In *A Primer of Italian Fascism*, ed. Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 198–204, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
21. Burgwyn, *Mussolini and the Salò Republic*, 291.
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25. The Ultimate Turning Point: Total War, in Roger Griffin. 1995. *Fascism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 161.
26. See Jaeger, Hans. 1960. *The Reappearance of the Swastika*, London: Gamma Press.
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31. *National European*, October 1964, 5.
32. Bale, *Darkest Side*, 62 [emphasis as original].
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36. Griffin, Fascism's New Faces, *Fascism Past and Present, West and East*, 51.
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42. See Copsey, Radical Right and Fascism.
43. de Benoist, Alain and Champetier, Charles. Manifesto for a European Renaissance, in *Against Democracy and Equality*, 230.
44. Ibid.
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49. See *L'Express*, 8 March 2012, online at https://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/francois-duprat-l-homme-qui-inventa-le-front-national_1091093.html [accessed 4.3.20].
50. For a biography of Duprat in English, see Rees, Philip. 1990. *Biographical Dictionary of the Extreme Right Since 1890*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 106–7.
51. See Macklin, Graham. 2007. *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Resurrection of British Fascism After 1945*, London: Bloomsbury, 119.
52. Yockey, Francis Parker. 1948. Imperium: The Philosophy of History and Politics, online at http://www.jrbooksonline.com/PDF_Books/Imperium103.pdf [accessed 4.3.20].
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PART II

Case Studies



Fascism 1919–2019: A False Centenary

Emilio Gentile

When and where was Fascism born? The answer might seem obvious: Fascism was born on March 23, 1919 with the establishment of the *Fasci di combattimento* (Combat Leagues), proclaimed by Benito Mussolini during a meeting in the Hall of the Industrial and Commercial Alliance, at number 9 in Piazza San Sepolcro in Milan. Still, the answer is not obvious. For example, some scholars have traced the origins of Fascism, as an ideology if not as a political party, in France in the early twentieth century, in the philosophy of Joseph de Maistre, a reactionary thinker of the eighteenth century, in the absolutism of Thomas Hobbes, and even in Sparta in the seventh century BC.

Therefore, the question on the date of the birth of Fascism inevitably brings to the fore another question: of what Fascism we celebrate the centenary this year? In fact, the centenary of the *Fasci di combattimento* coincided with a new wave of current controversies on an alleged ‘return of fascism’ in Italy, in Europe and even in the world, many analysts

For a more detailed treatment of the theme of this article, see Gentile, Emilio. 2019. *Quando Mussolini non era il duce*. Milano: Garzanti.

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applying the ‘fascist’ label not only to the various and heterogeneous neo-fascist movements, which explicitly appropriate the ideas, symbols, myths, and rites of Mussolini’s Fascism, but also to the various movements of the new populist and xenophobic nationalism, which reclaim the sovereignty of the State against globalisation or its subordination to the process of European integration. Many comments on the centenary of the *Fasci di combattimento* have tried to demonstrate that all these movements, and especially their leaders, display alarming similarities and analogies with Mussolini and Fascism. Other comments argue that, despite similarities, current Fascism is the reappearance, “under new guise” of an alleged “eternal fascism.”¹

Since nothing is eternal in history and—as a historian, I have no skills for studying the eternity or predicting the future—I believe that the only way to answer the questions and controversies mentioned above is to seek answers in history itself.

When today, in historiography, there is talk of Fascism, everywhere in the world, the discussion refers to a political phenomenon that for at least eight decades has left its mark on the history of the twentieth century, starting with the interwar period. That historical mark consists of the violence of *squadrismo*, the anti-democratic revolution of a militia party, the establishment of a totalitarian regime, the regimentation of the masses, the dogmatic indoctrination of men and women of all ages in the fascist religion and the cult of the leader, the militarisation of the nation. Once it acquired these fundamental characteristics, Fascism continued to impose its mark on the history of the twentieth century with the aggression on an independent African state in order to conquer a colonial empire, the alliance with Hitler’s Germany, the adoption of racist and anti-Semitic legislation, participation in World War II against Western democracies and the Soviet Union, in an effort to build a new civilisation in the myth of Roman times under the sign of the *littorio*, destined to perpetuate itself over the centuries; and finally, from 1943 to 1945, with a ruthless civil war among the Italians. Overwhelmed and demolished by the military defeat, at the end of April 1945, Fascism ceased to further imprint its mark on the history of the twentieth century.

A third question arises here: Was the Fascism that imprinted its mark in the history of the twentieth century, the same phenomenon that arose in Italy in 1919? The answer would obviously be affirmative if we simply find that both had the same name and the same leader. Nevertheless, is this observation sufficient to consider them identical, as a single phenomenon

that contains the same characteristics in a sort of immutable and predetermined DNA? Within the space limits of this contribution, I will test this hypothesis to ascertain whether it is correct to take March 23, 1919, as the birth date of Fascism that left its mark in history.

In his book *The Nature of Fascism*, published in 1991, Roger Griffin states that the name *Fasci di combattimento*, given by Mussolini to the new movement he founded in Milan on March 23, 1919, “in itself celebrated the anti-democratic ethos of interventionism and the radicalismo of *combattentismo*. At the same time, it implied a cellular movement based on sustained revolutionary action and struggle (*combattimento*) rather than an empty rhetoric and political machination which only perpetuated an ailing political system”.²

The interpretation of ‘the Fascism of 1919’ as an anti-democratic revolutionary movement, ready for violent action against a liberal regime deemed decadent and unable to govern the new Italy, born or regenerated from the Great War, was shared, albeit with different motivations, by most of the Italian and foreign historiography, and also by this writer.³ For Renzo De Felice, for example, the Fascism of 1919 was a movement belonging to the interventionist left, which was born with the imprint of Mussolini, who still remained a revolutionary even if he had repudiated Marxism, because during the Great War he had converted to nationalism, but not to the traditionalist and authoritarian nationalism.⁴ Zeev Sternhell and his collaborators have argued that since the end of 1918 “*le fascisme mussolinien a déjà presque tous ses contours*” as an ideology elaborated by the synthesis between nationalism and revolutionary syndicalism, which had already been accomplished in France in the early twentieth century, through the idealistic revision of Marxism.⁵ Other historians, on the other hand, claimed that Mussolini and the Fascism of 1919 were already a reactionary, authoritarian and imperialist movement, while the “leftist” program proposed by the *Fasci di combattimento* was only an opportunistic and demagogic mask.⁶ Some other scholars, particularly endowed with a capacity for retrospective forecast, have argued that the fundamental ideas of the fascist, totalitarian and imperialist leader have already been consolidated in the views of ‘interventionist Mussolini,’ from 1915 to 1918.⁷

This contribution to the historiographical controversy mentioned above is a new investigation into Mussolini and the Fascism of 1919, conducted according to a method proper to historiography, since the time

of Herodotus and Thucydides, namely to try to ascertain 'how things really happened'.

Let us start by checking how 'things' really went for Mussolini. During the Great War, the former head of revolutionary socialism and former editor of the newspaper *Avanti!*, of the Socialist Party, was expelled from the party because he had supported Italy's entry into the war. He founded his own newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia*. He repudiated Marxism, socialism, and the proletarian revolution, converted to national unionism, and led a violent controversy against his former comrades, who continued to accuse him of being a traitor paid by the bourgeoisie.

At the end of the war, Mussolini tried to take on a leading role in guiding the new mass of veterans, to whom he assigned the mission of realising an 'Italian revolution,' which began with the entry into the war, to bring to power a new ruling class, formed by the fighters. At the same time, Mussolini intensified the violent campaign against the Socialist Party, which after 1917 had joined the Bolshevik Revolution with the aim of acquiring the power by violent means to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

However, despite the rhetoric of the 'Italian revolution,' in 1919 Mussolini did not propose any revolutionary program, neither political nor social. His conception of national unionism was not anti-capitalist, because it proposed collaboration between the classes to increase production; it exalted the modernising function of industrial capitalism and the leading role of the productive bourgeoisie. As for workers, Mussolini proposed a program of reforms very similar to the reforms required by the reformist current of the Socialist party and by the General Confederation of Labor, the strongest Italian trade union organisation, which was bound by a pact of unity of action with the Socialist Party, but was led by reformist leaders. Finally, to continue the 'Italian revolution,' Mussolini did not propose revolutionary methods, but the absolutely legal methods of free electoral competition, demanding a democratic reform from Parliament with universal male and female suffrage, and the proportional system with list voting.

Mussolini's policy, immediately after the end of the war, was not different from that of the other radical movements and democratic parties that had supported interventionism and were hostile to the Socialist Party and the Bolshevik Revolution. When, on November 19, 1918, Mussolini launched an appeal to convene a "Constituent Assembly of the New Italy" (*Costituente della Nuova Italia*), with the mandate to elaborate a program

of radical democratic and social reforms, he only proposed to elaborate “the solution of all the fundamental problems of national life”.⁸ Four days later, Mussolini specified the aims of his initiative:

1. Gather to the “Constituent Assembly” all those who wanted the intervention and who are committed, now that the war has been triumphantly won, not to allow peace to be sabotaged.
2. Create the “Leagues for the Constituent Assembly” (*Fasci per la Costituente*), to which the *Fasci* will send their delegates to the “Constituent Assembly of Italian Interventionism” (*Costituente dell’interventismo italiano*) which will be convened by January in Milan. The delay is due to the need to prepare the meeting well, so that it is not a meeting like any other, but something more and better.
3. The Constituent of Italian Interventionism will be devoted to finding solutions to the fundamental problems of our nation.
4. The anti-party will emerge from the Constituent Assembly of Italian Interventionism, that is, a “fascist” organisation that will have nothing in common with the “creeds”, with the “dogmas”, with the “mentality” and above all with the “prejudices” of the old parties, in how much will allow the coexistence and the community of action of all those—whatever their political, religious, economic creeds—who accept a given solution to given problems.
5. The Constituent of Italian Interventionism is the prelude to the Constituent Assembly of the Italian People, and the Leagues for the Constituent Assembly must constitute the skeleton, the armour around which to gather the returnees and their powerfully renewing energies. The old parties are cadaveric relics, and it will not be difficult to submerge them completely.⁹

Mussolini made no mention of the revolution as means to achieve his goals. Even the new “fascist” organisation, the “anti-party”, was not revolutionary. The editor of *Il Popolo d’Italia* summarised his program and his action with the formula “renewal, not revolution”, as he stated on November 9, 1918: “No political revolution, no extremism, no expropriation and not even class struggle, if business leaders are smart. Intense, harmonious collaboration of industrialists and workers in production; satisfaction with the ‘right demands of organized work’”.¹⁰

Mussolini was in fact convinced, as he declared a month later, that a revolution, even if undertaken by the interventionists, would play the game of the Socialists and favour their Bolshevik Revolution. "Rushing events when the forces necessary for an organized domination and control are lacking, simply for the sake of the political competition, is stupid and dangerous. We are not and will not become a party. We don't have that kind of mentality. The socialist officials also trumpeted their 'Constituent Assembly.' Ours, in the first and second place, is something fundamentally different. We do not intend to enter their game". Therefore, Mussolini thought it necessary to avoid "silly headshots. If we refused during neutrality and during the war to work for the king of Prussia, we do not intend to work after the war that we won for these ignoble allies of the king of Prussia who were and will be the official Italian socialists". The same initiative for the Constituent Assembly, Mussolini pointed out, had no revolutionary purpose, nor did it intend to propose the end of the monarchy in order to establish the republic. Even if his sympathies were republican, Mussolini granted the monarchy the possibility of continuing to exist, on condition of approving "the solutions of the problems of profound renewal proposed and resolved by us. [...] Nothing prevents us from thinking that the Italian monarchic institution adapts itself to exercising, as in England, a simply decorative function of national life. [...] We believe that the Italian monarchy is a vessel capable of containing many reforms".¹¹

From the first part of our exercise in historical 'verification', it is clear that Mussolini's trajectory immediately after the end of the Great War did not go in the direction of revolution and anti-capitalism, but proceeded in the wake of legal renewal, of electoral democracy with universal suffrage, and of class collaboration between capitalists and workers. Nor did he demand the establishment of the republic.

Choosing this path, at the beginning of 1919, 'things' went really bad for Mussolini. If his political conduct was dictated by opportunism, his opportunism was of no use to him. In fact, Mussolini's initiative to assume the role of leader of the mass of veterans failed, because despite the constant appeals of his newspaper to summon the Constituent of interventionism to Milan, he eventually had to give up for reduced adhesions.

In fact, Mussolini was essentially isolated in the interventionist camp, having only groups of *arditi* ('the daring ones') and futurists as companions, with whom he shared the myth of the "Italian revolution", the

exaltation of war and victory, hatred against the socialists, but not the intentions against the government. On January 29, in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, he “sincerely” boasted that he had become “a cynical insensitive now, to anything other than adventure”.¹²

His newspaper had a national circulation, but little funding, few subscribers, and a modest number of readers. When, in early March, he decided to launch a new initiative to set up his own political movement, he announced it as a “private meeting” of collaborators and readers of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, convened for March 23 in Milan. Mussolini was only looking for a device to accredit himself as the promoter of a new political movement. The announcement was made on March 2, with a bold note on the third page below, with the title: *Meeting for March 23!*:

Correspondents, collaborators, followers of *Il Popolo d'Italia*, fighters, ex-fighters, citizens and representatives of the *Fasci della “Nuova Italia”* (Leagues of the “New Italy”), of Milan and the rest of the Nation are invited to attend the private meeting, which will be held in Milan on March 23. Friends who will intervene personally or on behalf of groups are kindly requested to notify us without delay. We will also take into account adhesions sent by letter. The meeting will be very important.

However, no article explained the reason and importance of the meeting. Four days later, Mussolini wrote that he could already say, “from now on, that the March 23 rally will be impressive, solemn. Individual and collective memberships flock to our table with extraordinary fervor and concern. We will set the modalities of the meeting in due course, which will take place in one of the main city theaters. From that gathering will be born the *Fasci di Combattimento* (Combat Leagues), whose program is enclosed in the word. For today, let’s not say more”.¹³ Despite the optimistic emphasis of the announcements, in truth Mussolini had no illusions about the success of the new initiative and its future as an aspiring political leader: in fact, on March 14, in his newspaper, he still presented himself as an “adventurer of all roads”.¹⁴ Moreover, only three days before the “private meeting”, speaking to the workers of a factory on strike, who had occupied the factories continuing production, Mussolini declared: “They may have told you what you want. I do not care. I am an individualist who does not look for companions on his path. Find them, but do not look for them”.¹⁵ These words were certainly not the most appropriate

for a politician who was about to start a new movement, and they were indeed not a manifestation of confidence in the success of his initiative.

In fact, on March 23, 'things' still went really badly for Mussolini. The participants in the meeting amounted to around fifty or a hundred adherents and curious.¹⁶ The national press ignored the event or relegated it to a very brief news report. The meeting for the foundation of the Combat Leagues lasted a few hours and ended with generic declarations of radical renewal. A draft program was presented by Mussolini in his newspaper on March 30 and had nothing revolutionary: in fact, he asked for universal suffrage for men and women over 21 years old; the decrease of the age to be elected to the Chamber from 31 to 25 years; political elections with list voting and with proportional representation; the abolition of the Senate. "The deputies elected in the next elections," the program continued "will form the National Assembly", which "will last three years" and its "act will be to decide on the form of government of the state".

Mussolini recognised that the postulates of his program were not new and "not even revolutionary" but they proposed "an extension, a perfecting of political democracy", which had to be renewed by associating the representation of interests, expressed in the new organs of the National Councils, with political representation: "The parliament remains and the new system of direct representations of all concerned stands next to it". The goal was to "give Italy a new 'constitution'", accepting the widespread need for trade union or technical representation, to establish two legislative chambers: "one on a popular basis, the other on a professional basis; one policy and the other trade union or technical, unless you prefer to focus the entire representative system on professional suffrage". Mussolini pointed out that the program had nothing revolutionary and was very similar to that of the General Confederation of Labor.¹⁷

On April 13, Mussolini presented other "postulates of immediate implementation", which the government had to make his own: the eight-hour day for all workers, an "extraordinary progressive tax on capital to meet the post-war needs, especially for what concerns the provisions in favor of the maimed, the disabled, the fighters, and the families of the fallen".¹⁸ On the evening of the same day, at the assembly of the Milanese Combat Leagues. Mussolini specified that the program shown in the newspaper "is my program, but it might be that it is not yours. In this case, we can discuss and modify it".¹⁹

The development of the program continued in the following weeks. “Little by little, without falling into the precipitations and anticipations of the Pussist [derogatory form for the Socialist] demagoguery, the political program of the *Fasci di combattimento* is elaborated and completed”, said Mussolini on May 12, 1919.²⁰ On June 6, the definitive program of the *Fasci di combattimento* was finally published in *Il Popolo d’Italia*. It contained most of the proposals already made by Mussolini, with the addition of other postulates, which expanded the demands of democratic reforms both in the social, economic and institutional fields: “the participation of workers’ representatives in the technical functioning of the industry, counting on those workers’ organizations that are morally and technically worthy”, of the management of industries and public services, the obligation of the owners to cultivate the land, “with the sanction that the non-cultivated lands are given in cooperatives to the peasants, with special regard to the veterans from the trench” and the obligation of the state to build farmhouses; increase in compulsory state education “of an impartial but rigidly secular nature”, with the allocation of the necessary funds in the budget; bureaucratic decentralisation and simplification of services; “a strong extraordinary progressive capital tax, which takes the form of a real partial expropriation of all wealth; seizure of all the assets of religious congregations and abolition of bishopric canteens “which constitute an enormous passivity for the nation and a privilege of the few”; review of all war supply contracts and seizure of 85% of war profits; institution of the armed nation with short periods of instruction “for the sole precise purpose of the defense of its rights and interests as determined by foreign policy” intended to “enhance the will and efficiency of Italy against any foreign imperialism” and “a dynamic policy that is, in contrast to that which tends to establish the hegemony of the current plutocratic powers”.

The program of the *Fasci di combattimento*, despite the bellicose denomination, made no reference, not even rhetorical, to the “Italian revolution”. The term “combat”, in addition to referring to the fight against Bolshevism, was aimed above all at attracting the veterans, who amounted to about five million, to the new movement, while it did not imply any intention to organise illegal actions or insurrectional riots. Therefore, it was not a revolutionary program, but a reformist one, just as it was not anti-capitalist in economic claims. In fact, the postulates concerning the financial problem, such as the strong progressive tax on capital, were not an attack on private property and the capitalist structure of the Italian economy. The mention of workers’ participation in

the technical functioning of the industry and the proposal to entrust the management of industries and public services, limited to proletarian organisations deemed morally and technically worthy, did not provide for any type of expropriation of the factories owned by the capitalists.

The praise of Mussolini and his newspaper to industrious industrialists, to the “bourgeoisie of work”, were as numerous as the acknowledgments of the right of industrious workers, who were not drunk with the Bolshevik myth, to receive a just reward and better living conditions, both in factories and in society. Mussolini’s proletarian rhetoric had nothing demagogic, because it explicitly denied the working masses the possibility of replacing the bourgeois class as the ruling class.

As for its organisation, the *Fasci di combattimento* was defined as an “anti-party” and as such it rejected the structure and discipline proper to political parties: “its internal life”, explained Mussolini’s newspaper, “is absolutely autonomous. Statutes, regulations, etc. all of this is party stuff. Each league will provide its members with a card for personal recognition and will have a regulation with only one article: the member who is missing three consecutive times at the meeting is automatically discharged. That’s enough. There is no need for anything else. [...] It is only by creating this joint, libertarian and powerful organization that we will be able to ‘act’ at the right moment”. And once again, the newspaper showed little commitment in specifying its program: “It is useless to list all the reforms, to present all the problems, to expose all the solutions, if the means of agitation and implementation are lacking. This is the purpose of the *Fasci*. There exists a broad program. We need to gather and stretch our energies”.²¹

It was only on July 3 that Mussolini tried, for the first time, to define in an article, what the movement he founded was and what he wanted, using for the first time the noun “fascism” in the title of an article. He began by stating that the movement he promoted had not been conceived to live long, even though he presented it as “the liveliest, most daring, most renewal, most revolutionary force, not in the bestial sense of the Vendéans, that there is in Italy”, and the only one capable of contending for the Socialist Party “the exclusive monopoly of the square”. Despite the triumphant tone, it was evident from the description of Fascism itself that Mussolini considered it only a temporary expedient to try to assume some political role among the masses of veterans. But he reiterated that the new movement had no revolutionary purpose for the conquest of power:

The *Fasci* are not, they do not want, they cannot be, they cannot become a party. The *Fasci* are the temporary organization of all those who accept given solutions to given current problems. [...] It has no statutes or regulations. It adopted a card for the need for personal recognition, but if it could, it would have gladly done without it. It is not a nursery for electoral ambitions. It does not admit or tolerate long speeches. Go to the concrete issues. [...] It limited its program to a few essential and immediate implementation points. [...] We should also add that Fascism not only does not oppose, but also supports, on a professional level, the action of the General Confederation of Labor, since Fascism is anti-Pussist, but being productivist, it cannot be and is not anti-proletarian.

Fascism is a movement of reality, of truth, of life that adheres to life. And pragmatist. It has no apriorisms. Nor remote purposes. It does not promise the usual paradises of the ideal. Leave these quackings to the tribes of the membership card. It does not presume to live forever and much. It will live until it has completed the work it has set for himself. Once the solution in our sense of the fundamental problems that trouble the Italian nation has been reached, Fascism will not persist in living, like an anachronistic superfetation of professionals of a given politics but will know how to die brilliantly without solemn grimaces. [...]

Fascism will always remain a movement of minorities. It cannot spread outside cities. But soon each of the three hundred major cities of Italy will have its own *Fascio dei Combattimento* and the imminent national gathering will gather this formidable complex of new forces in the harmonious and libertarian unity of action.²²

In the following months, ‘things’ continued to go wrong for Mussolini, and also for his movement. If Mussolini and the fascists were paid by the reactionary or Masonic industrial bourgeoisie, to be a “white guard” against the proletariat, the money was an unnecessary expense. In reality, the *Fasci* remained a movement of a few scattered and insignificant groups in front of the organised masses of the Socialist Party and the General Confederation of Labor. Only the *Fascio di Milano* (League of Milan) was active, to which the national leaders belonged, but it is important to specify that Mussolini attributed so little importance and future to the movement he had just founded, that he did not want to be officially the leader, leaving the leadership of the organisation to others. Attilio Longoni, a revolutionary trade unionist, was appointed to the position of General Secretary of the *Fasci*. He remained in office for only three months: in August, he was replaced by Umberto Pasella, a professional organiser, also from revolutionary unionism.²³

In the movement he founded, Mussolini was not the 'leader' who ordered to be obeyed. No fascist addressed Mussolini, calling him leader. For the closest collaborators, it was simply "Benito", for outsiders it was "Comrade Mussolini" or "Professor Mussolini". As Eno Mecheri, one of the founders of the *Fasci* and deputy secretary in 1919 (and a bit later an antifascist), recalled:

Of this initial movement, Mussolini was neither more nor less than a simple member of the Central Committee; his proposals were scrutinised like all the others, discussed, opposed and sometimes even rejected. Not being a sect and not even a party but an agglomeration of elements coming almost all from the avant-garde political forces, the spirit of subjection to man—which was later established in the fascist party—was not even felt in this free environment and unscrupulous.

Of course, the figure of Mussolini exerted a certain charm, especially in young people who felt in him the qualities of a real boss.

Mussolini himself was keen to point out that he was "only a member of the Central Committee of the *Fasci italiani di Combattimento*".²⁴ Furthermore, he did not want to make *Il Popolo d'Italia* appear as the official newspaper of the fascist movement. In fact, on August 15 the first issue of the "*Fascio*" came out, which in the subtitle had "Organ of the Italian Bombard Leagues" (*Organo dei Fasci italiani di combattimento*). The presentation stated that "our work and our attitude will not predictably differ from that of Benito Mussolini's newspaper, which, in addition to being an authoritative member of the CC [Central Committee], is also always the best interpreter of our faith and our will".²⁵ But, even when he was solicited, Mussolini never wrote an article for the official organ of the movement he founded. He considered it a kind of branch of his newspaper: "The friend Mussolini gives the '*Fascio*' some article that it is impossible for him to publish on the *Popolo*", Pasella said to the secretary of the Roman *Fascio* on September 7.²⁶

On September 12, to respond to the continuous accusations of *Avanti!* against Mussolini concerning the financing of his newspaper, Cesare Rossi, editor of *Fascio*, and Mecheri, wrote him a letter published in the *Popolo d'Italia*, in which they specified:

Since *Avanti!*—now forced to conduct the controversy with the most monotonous repetitions and with foolish and inconclusive revelations—he attributes to you all the hypothetical responsibilities of Milanese and perhaps interplanetary interventionism, it would be good that the readers of *Popolo* and the Fascists know how in all that constitutes the

internal movement and the administrative life of the Italian Combat Leagues (*Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*), you only have to do one, as a member—as authoritative as you wish,—but always one of the Central Committee.²⁷

Furthermore, it does not appear that Mussolini has ever personally contributed to promoting the creation of new Leagues, even if his presence, as a founder of the movement and the movement's best known, most prestigious and fascinating personality, would certainly have had greater weight and effectiveness in recruiting new adherents and in encouraging the creation of new *Fasci di Combattimento*. In reality, the founder of the *Fasci* did not have many ambitions for his political creature, which he conceived only as an expedient to show himself as the leader of his own movement, to accompany the newspaper, and as an associative tool, with which to try to intervene in the political struggle boasting its own following. Furthermore, Mussolini was often absent from the meetings of the Central Committee of the *Fasci* and it does not appear that he has ever participated in any outstanding demonstration, such as those that the *arditi* and futurist fascists sometimes staged, with violent performances against political opponents or against the public force, praising the revolution and the republic.

In the concrete political attitude, while inciting the fascists to fight against the socialist hegemony in the squares and factories, also with the use of violence, when on April 15 fascists, *arditi* and futurists set fire to the headquarters of the *Avanti!* in Milan, Mussolini exalted their action but throughout 1919 he was never in favour of the violent initiatives and insurrectional purposes of other fascists, such as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, member of the Central Committee of the *Fasci*. While in the newspaper he railed against the government, Mussolini did not take part in the street riots nor took initiatives to promote them, not even in the summer, when there occurred everywhere in Italy violent demonstrations against the government, headed by Francesco Saverio Nitti, due to the high cost of living, which were also joined by the Fascists, with the support of Mussolini's newspaper.

In practice, throughout 1919, Mussolini continued to oppose illegal or revolutionary actions. On July 22, he published a long speech in which, with a tortuous phraseology, while rhetorically exalting the unrest as a continuation of the "Italian revolution", he at the same time warned against revolutionary initiatives by the fascists, repeating that doing so would only favour the socialists:

For me, the revolution is not a San Vitus dance or a sudden outbreak of epilepsy. It must have strengths, goals, and above all, a method. [...] It is not already a question, as some think, of passing or entering the revolution, just as one passes from the state of immobility to the state of movement. The task of truly free spirits is different: if this great, immense transformation of the watertight and invasive world, we can accelerate the rhythm of the movement; but if this movement is already frenetic, then our task is not to push, but to brake and delay to avoid disintegration and ruin. Being revolutionary in the given circumstances of time and place, can be the pride of a lifetime, but when those who speak of revolution are the herds of the Vendéans and parasites, then one must not fear, opposing, to go for reactionaries. [...] On the other hand, speaking of reaction and revolution, I have a compass that guides me: "Anything that can make the Italian people great, gains my supports; and vice versa, everything that tends to lower, to brutalize, to impoverish the Italian people, finds me against."²⁸

Fascists who wanted to promote street actions against the government, joining the striking workers, always met with Mussolini's opposition. On July 17, after an assembly of representatives of the Fasci from all over Italy, Marinetti wrote in his diary: "Around the green carpet. Rotating lights of electric bulbs on Mussolini's absolutely shaved skull. Mussolini speaks opposing any defense of the strike. It acts as a brakeman, as always, an eloquent brakeman irritated hard by the extremist part of the Fasci".²⁹ And the next day, referring to the collaborators of the Mussolini newspaper, the leader of the Futurists, he noted: "All reactionary journalists thirsting for editorial glory and having a large *Popolo d'Italia* like *Corriere della Sera*. They all speak of revolution but do not want it".³⁰ Mussolini's anti-revolutionary attitude provoked a serious disagreement in the Milanese *Fascio*, as reported by a police informer on July 26:

The Fascist movement that hinges on Mussolini is very serious. He had believed that he would postpone and not foment the unconstitutional turmoil because he feared that if "the constitutional wall had been broken," the movement would not stop and the socialists would channel it into the unknown.

It was his intention to first liquidate the danger of a Bolshevik [sic] experiment and then tackle the anti-monarchist problem.

This attitude had given rise to divergences and divisions between the various former interventionist associations, and a real disagreement had

broken out between Mussolini - who had become the most temperate - in comparison with Carli, Giunta, Marinetti, Zavattaro etc.

In these days, an agreement between these groups has been reached for the development of a concordant and organic action that will center on the unconstitutional ground as the foundation of a new political order.

The movement is more serious than it seems. It also has deep roots in the army and in many categories of officials.³¹

In reality, the informant overestimated the consistency of the fascist movement and exaggerated the danger for the institutions. In fact, five months after its birth, Fascism was a noisy movement, sometimes violent, but still too small to play a decisive role in the political struggle. Mussolini's influence was also limited between the interventionists and the veterans, who also were a fairly large audience and subject to constant attention from Mussolini and his newspaper.

Throughout 1919, the *Fasci di combattimento* remained an improvised hodgepodge of a few heterogeneous groups of interventionism and combatism scattered in various places on the peninsula and often had a precarious existence, even in the major cities in which they were created, such as Rome and Naples. Some disappeared immediately after the announcement of their birth, others no longer showed signs of life or reappeared later, but with uncertain duration. For example, on July 15, from Naples, the correspondent of the Mussolini newspaper Ernesto De Angelis, reported that he had explained to the "common friend of ours Mussolini" the reasons that had made "all my efforts" vain to increase the activity of the section he had established, above all for "the fear of the veterans of our glorious battles, not to participate openly in order not to provoke disciplinary measures against them", such as the transfer from Naples. De Angelis, however, informed that he had managed to set up another Fascio "in limited proportions and secret, since I remain and I am always enthusiastic about the magnificent work begun by Mussolini, and for which I came to Milan in the meeting on March 23 to obtain the mandate of start it here in Naples". He concluded, like other correspondent promoters of the *Fasci*, asking to be considered "trustee" and receive financial support to rent a place. But after more than a month, on August 28 Pasella somewhat irritated wrote to the Neapolitan trustee to ask him whether or not a fascist section existed in Naples: "Now we cannot continue to neglect - as was done in the past - very important centers such as Naples in order to boost the activity of the *Fascio* of ...

Roccacannuccia”, while in the South it was necessary to focus on the large centres: “It is precisely in the south that the new awareness of a renewed Italy must arise because the blood sacrifices of the children of the southern lands were infinitely higher than those endured by the populations of the North, who instead gave a strong percentage of more or less legitimate ambushes”.³²

Equally discouraging was the news from other cities, mainly due to the poor membership and participation: “In Genoa we continue to sleep big”, wrote Mecheri on September 2, while, he asserted, “throughout Italy, there is a wonderful movement”.³³ But it was a lie, because Mecheri himself, on August 24, had complained about the apathy of the *Fasci*: “It is a matter of shaking those friends of ours - who too easily indulge in the most messianic apathy, and of soliciting the pride of the ex-combatants to whom it is up to continue the battle in the interior for Italy to be seriously renewed. Absenteeism right now is a serious culprit”. Beyond apathy, there was a boycott by opponents and local government authorities. On August 26, Pasella, while travelling around various cities to become aware of the situation of the *Fasci*, wrote from Florence to Mecheri, that the post offices boycotted the spread of the *Fasci* organ: “Here there are various Republicans who wage a covert war on the Combat Leagues, calling them reactionaries, sellouts, etc. This results from the confidence of other Republicans”. On September 7, the secretary of the *Fascio* of Rome, Pasella made it known that “we are being signaled by the government, the Pussist postal workers and the Bolshevik railway workers, to a truly bandit sabotage, so much so that from various parts of Italy we have received reports of missing parcel arrivals. They call us sold !!! The truth is that we are being signaled to an incessant persecution of H. E. Minister Nitti. Even the n/s telegrams are delayed or not delivered”.³⁴ Discouraging news still from Naples sent the correspondent of the Mussolinian newspaper Ernesto De Angelis, promoter of the Neapolitan *Fascio*, who complained that “the environment over there is polluted and that therefore it is not possible to constitute a serious *Fascio*.” After a tour in Tuscany, on September 14, Pasella again reported: “we have made a sign of a continuous boycott also by the government, indeed we are in possession of a Nitti circular which invites the prefect to oppose the movement. It seems to me that the Italian government is preparing with the utmost unconsciousness the advent of neutralist forces. We have to react”.³⁵ The same situation denounced the promoter of the *Fascio* of Modena on September 16: “We are monitored as anarchists-dynamics;

serious measures have been taken [...]. We are informed that the police are about to search our premises and in homes of various fascists”, a package of the posters had been tampered with and leaflets were missing, and copies of *Il Popolo d'Italia* had been seized by order “of the police pigs from the maximum pig unleashed and educated.... Hand grenades in Parliament!”³⁶

From late summer to late December 1919, ‘things’ were even worse for Mussolini and the *Fasci di combattimento*. Few joined from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, almost nobody among the working masses, not even in Milan, where Mussolini was, in any case, a leading figure since 1912. On September 13 *Il Fascio* described the situation in the following way: “In its origins, Fascism was a somewhat chaotic movement, not in its program and in its spirit which is the result of that lucid mind of Benito Mussolini, but in its organic structure [...] the elements that prevail in fascism are largely elements of the bourgeoisie and the workers make up a small minority”.³⁷

And ‘things’ went even worse for Mussolini after Gabriele D’Annunzio, on September 12, occupied the city of Fiume [Rijeka] with his legionaries to obtain its annexation to Italy. The next day, Mussolini wrote that the poet’s task had to be to gain sympathies especially among the workers, because it challenged “a powerful coalition”, which had been formed in Versailles, not only against Italy “but against of all the other proletarian nations, for their population, or proletarians for their regime,” a “great coalition of interests that has imposed itself by force and blackmail”.

However, Mussolini’s exaltation of d’Annunzio’s company hid a feeling that was anything but enthusiastic, because in the previous months, the attitude of the director of *Il Popolo d'Italia* had undergone a considerable change towards the question of Fiume, and, more generally, of the “mutilated victory”. In fact, without renouncing to claim the annexation of Fiume in words, Mussolini dismissed the formula of “mutilated victory”, because he realised that it played in favour of the neutralists to condemn interventionism and war as a failure for Italy, paid for with a serious sacrifice of human lives. On September 11, Mussolini commented on the peace treaty with Austria without any allusion to the “mutilated victory”, and stated that the treaty placed “the definitive seal on the realization of one of our fundamental war objectives”:

Italy has come to Brennero [Brenner]. The tricolor is hoisted on Vetta d'Italia. Our geographical border will henceforth coincide with our political border. Between us Latins and the German race, as father Dante wanted, the solemn and almost inaccessible shield of the Alps. All the streets from which the sun-hungry German herds descended for centuries, are barred.

The event is of exceptional historical significance. If the Italians had not been tired of ten months of unnecessary waiting; if other facts did not upset the public opinion; if the Adriatic problem had already been solved, according to justice and according to our good law, it is certain that the news of the signing of the peace of Saint Germain would have been welcomed in Italy by an explosion of great enthusiasm. It matters little if the enthusiasm does not explode in the usual forms of songs, illuminations and flags: the immense significance of the event remains.

Having come to such an entirely positive evaluation of the victorious conclusion of the Italian war, which confirmed his personal victory as an interventionist, Mussolini did not have to like very much, neither politically nor personally, the undertaking that brought the soldier poet back to the fore on the national scene and worldwide, giving it a renewed heroic halo in the eyes of the veterans, and above all of the young people, to whom the *Fasci di combattimento* have been turning for six months without much success. Many young people came to Fiume. And even young fascists were trembling to join the poet in the adventurous venture.

But, despite the blatant support that the Mussolini newspaper and *Il Fascio* gave non-stop to D'Annunzio's enterprise, the general secretary of the *Fasci* tried to dissuade the young fascists, who turned to him to find out how to go to Fiume, to leave there Italy. On September 29, Pasella wrote to the Florentine fascists, who wanted to reach Fiume: "we need men here and not in Fiume where they have exuberance. Friends don't understand that it takes more courage to stay here than to go to Fiume".³⁸

At the verbal exaltation for D'Annunzio's enterprise, Mussolini did not immediately follow concrete acts to help the poet, if on September 16 d'Annunzio wrote him a lashing letter, accusing him of doing nothing to rise up against the government of Nitti, which had condemned the company as a serious act of revolt:

My dear Mussolini,

I am amazed at you and the Italian people.

I risked everything, I gave everything, I had everything. I am the master of Fiume, of the territory, of a part of the armistice line, of the ships; and soldiers that I don't want to obey except me. There is nothing to do against me. Nobody can get me out of here. I have River; I keep Fiume as long as I live, irrefutably.

And you tremble with fear! You allow yourself to put on your neck the pig's foot of the most abject scammer who has ever illustrated the history of the universal rogue. Any other country. Lapland [Lapponia] too - would overthrow that man, those men. And you stand there chattering, while we struggle from moment to moment, with an energy that makes this venture the most beautiful after the departure of the Mille. Where are the fighters, the daring, the volunteers, the futurists?

I have all *soldiers* here, all soldiers in uniform, of all weapons. It is a regular business. And don't even help us with subscriptions and collections. We have to do everything ourselves, with our poverty. Awake! And be ashamed too. [...]

Is there really nothing to hope for? What about your promises? At least pierce the belly that oppresses you, and deflate them, otherwise I will come when I have consolidated my power here. But I won't look you in the face. Up! Shake yourselves, lazy of the eternal siesta. I have not slept in six nights, and the fever devours me. But I'm standing. And ask how, who has seen me.³⁹

With every expedient Mussolini continued to avoid getting involved in the Commander's revolutionary projects, while pretending to go along with him, as he wrote on September 25, exposing his own revolutionary plan:

First: march on Trieste 2nd declare the monarchy lapsed 3rd appoint a government directory that could be composed of Giardino, Caviglia, Rizzo and of which Directory you would be the President 4th Prepare the elections for the Constituent 5th declare - well understood - the annexation of Fiume 6th Send faithful troops to land in Romagna (Ravenna) in the Marche (Ancona) and in the Abruzzi, to help the republican uprising. These are my ideas. I submit them to your examination. But before the extreme decisions, I want to confer with you for the elaboration of the plan in its details. I am working.⁴⁰

But already on October 3, Mussolini dismissed his plan, because, he wrote to D'Annunzio, with the dissolution of the Chamber, "the situation has still changed. I think it is convenient to fix oneself on some points: no trespassing in Dalmatia: neither march inland if new events do not arrive, but to guard Fiume. It is a matter of waiting until November 16. That day we will get the great plebiscite for Fiume, and new people will leave the electoral rallies".⁴¹ In short, Mussolini now democratically entrusted the continuation of the "Italian revolution" to the political elections convened for November 16, 1919, after the electoral reform for proportional representation had been approved.

The participation of the fascists in the elections was approved by the first national congress of the *Fasci di combattimento* which was held in Florence on October 9 and 10, with the participation of a hundred delegates and the complete indifference of citizenship. At the end of the congress, the agenda with which the *Fasci di combattimento* claimed "by all means the Constituent Assembly for the fundamental transformation of the state, thus proposing to achieve an absolutely new political, social, economic structure" was unanimously approved. An agenda presented by Mussolini was also approved, which limited the electoral alliances of the fascists only to the blocks that defended "the need for intervention, the exaltation and defense of victory, and a solution of the Adriatic problem that consecrates interest and the rights of Italy", and accepted the fascist program. Participation in the blocs with the nationalists was not accepted.

In the elections, Mussolini hoped to present himself as leader of a coalition of leftist interventionists, from fascists to republicans. But even in this case, 'things' went very badly, because the leftist interventionist parties declared that they accepted the electoral alliance with the Fasci, but on condition that Mussolini was not a candidate. Of course, Mussolini reacted with pride: "if it is possible that my name could be excluded from a fascist list, it is absolutely not conceivable that my name could be missing from the list of interventionist concentration".⁴²

Mussolini's decision to impose his candidacy made the alliance fail. On October 24, he announced that Milanese Fascism would take the field alone, with "its natural and now inseparable allies who are the daring and war volunteers", because "the three associations are distinct in form, but merged and confused in the substance: it is three bodies and one soul. [...]. Ours is not an electoral struggle: this must be well nailed in the brain: it is a political struggle: it is the struggle that we will conduct

against all anti-national forces, summarized and symbolized today in the Nitti Government”.⁴³

In the articles and speeches of the election campaign, Mussolini presented the fascists as champions of freedom and democracy. “We are, above all, libertarians, that is, people who love freedom for everyone, even for opponents”. And he pledged to respect the rallies of the opponents, if the opponents would do nothing to prevent the rallies of the fascists, who were otherwise ready to “engage in full-blown combat,” because, Mussolini said, “the ‘game’ is one of the highest achievements and expressions of human civilization”.⁴⁴ Even as the ditirabe against the Socialist Party was less virulent, Mussolini went as far as to say that the interventionists, “having obtained the victory, could have, in a certain sense, supported an internal” but Italian “movement, even if led by the reformist socialists”.⁴⁵ In electoral rallies, Mussolini highlighted the intransigent aversion of the fascists for any dictatorship. The elections, he said on November 15, were a “historical battle on which the future of Italy largely depends”: “If Italy truly has a future, it is we who will bear the torch, we who have no dogmas, we who do not tolerate chains, we who fight only for freedom. [...] Remember that we fight above all for freedom, for our freedom and for everyone’s freedom. We are ready to support, in the name of freedom, any party that might be intimidated while campaigning, since we are averse to all forms of dictatorship, not excluding the shady dictatorship of the number”.⁴⁶

The Socialist Party emerged triumphantly from the ballot box: it obtained 1,834,792 votes and 156 deputies, becoming the first party in the new chamber. In Milan, the only constituency in which the fascists candidate, they collected 4796 votes, with no elected candidates. Mussolini had 2420 preferential votes, and 1987 added votes in total. *L’Avanti!* published a short article: “A corpse in a state of advanced putrefaction was fished out this morning in the Naviglio. It appears to be Benito Mussolini”; and that the socialists staged a farce funeral of the late Mussolini in his home. The socialist newspaper commented in a note entitled *Mussolini’s brigandage in action*, the explosion of a bomb near the headquarters of the *Avanti!*, during a socialist demonstration celebrating the electoral victory, causing dozens of wounded: “It is – affirmed *L’Avanti!* – a new cowardly aggression of political-futurist brigandage which only by perpetrating bloody violence, by hiring ignoble assassins, can still live among the millions of the bastard bourgeoisie and the conniving fear of public authority”. The Socialist Party had immediately

proclaimed a general protest strike, while the next day, the police searched the headquarters of *Il Popolo d'Italia* proceeding to arrest Mussolini, Marinetti, and Vecchi. However, on December 19, Mussolini and the others were released.

Mussolini tried to minimise defeat as much as possible, arguing, in the aftermath of the election results, that Fascism had only sought a “simple statement, limited to the electoral district of Milan. It didn’t want to be anything more. [...] We took the field to assert ourselves, and we succeeded. Ours is not a victory or a defeat: it is a political affirmation”.⁴⁷ The complete defeat burned a lot, but Mussolini consoled himself by predicting that the socialist victory was by no means a leap towards the Bolshevik Revolution. In his analysis of the socialist victory, Mussolini nevertheless sensed with acumen the weaknesses that would undermine it, coming to argue, on November 21, that “from a strictly political point of view, the socialist avalanche can be much less crushing than it is you look and could end up crushing and crushing yourself”. “Maximalism will end in an effort to replace the easy revolutionary ‘phrase’ with the impossible revolutionary ‘fact’”.⁴⁸

On December 7, in proposing the conduct of his newspaper for 1920, which he predicted to be “a year full of fate for Italy. It will have to mark the beginning of the recovery or the beginning of disintegration,” Mussolini stated that the fundamental directives of Fascism remained “the defense of victory, the opposition to Bolshevism and the Nitti government, and the need for a political and economic renewal of the State”. But then he added the willingness to support any government committed to solving the Italian crisis without revolutionary trauma: “Above our personal sympathies, above ideas or parties, we will support the men who will direct their political activity to prompt reconstruction of national life, without paying too much attention to their label. [...] We hope that inevitable transfers will take place through the legal channels, and we will oppose any dictatorial attempt”.⁴⁹ Even if he believed a regime crisis to be possible, “if the regime does not adapt quickly to new needs”, on December 22 he reiterated that he was against “regime change right now”: “The truth is that Italy is today in a situation that offers no choice. It is in a kind of dead end. Or drink or drown”. In this situation, Mussolini opposed, as he had done throughout 1919, any initiative to bring about the “Italian revolution”, as the one that D’Annunzio dreamed of in Fiume: “The truth is that D’Annunzio’s revolt, which we

approve wholeheartedly, cannot become the revolt of Italy, neither as a monarchic nor as a republican regime".⁵⁰

For Mussolini, 1919 ended, in every respect, with a total political failure. In December, the *Fasci di Combattimento* had just 37 sections with 800 members.⁵¹ Mussolini consoled himself by praising anarchy:

We who arouse all Christianity from the bottom up, from that of Jesus to that of Marx, look with extraordinary sympathy at this 'recovery' of modern life, in the pagan forms of the cult of strength and audacity. [...] Enough, red and black theologians of all churches, with the cunning and false promise of a paradise that will never come!

Enough, politicians of all schools, with your querulous 'academies'!

Enough, ridiculous saviors of the human race that doesn't care about your infallible 'found' to give us happiness.

Leave the path to the elementary forces of individuals clear, because no other human reality, apart from the individual, exists!

Why wouldn't Stirner return to current affairs?

At thirty-six, Mussolini was the shipwreck of a political and existential catastrophe. He thought of ending with politics, selling the newspaper, devoting himself to writing essays and dramas, or travelling the world with his violin.

As I said at the beginning, historians have studied Mussolini and the Fascism of 1919 proposing conflicting interpretations. Some argued that in the Mussolini of 1919 the basic features of the leader of a militia party, founder of a totalitarian, imperialist, racist, anti-Semitic and warmongering regime, were already present. Others argued that in 1919 Mussolini was still a revolutionary, at the same time anti-socialist and anti-capitalist. None of these interpretations passed the test of our historical verification of how 'things really went'.

In 1919, Mussolini was not yet the absolute leader of a totalitarian fascism. But he was not even a revolutionary or anti-capitalist and decidedly anti-monarchist. His proposed political and social reform agenda was no different from radical, democratic, and socialist reformism. If after 1914, he was an opportunist, he was a very bad opportunist because few adhered to his ideas and went along with his ambitions. His initiatives to become the guide of the new masses of veterans, ended in a few weeks with a failure. The very decision to found one's own political movement was the leading cause of his isolation in the deployment of interventionist parties. If someone or some more or less secret associations, if any interest

or power group, invested in Mussolini's opportunism to exploit his journalistic skills to his advantage, he would have made a bad investment. In fact, at the end of 1919, the political adventure of the founder of the *Fasci di combattimento* seemed to him doomed to definitively end in a sensational failure. The future seemed to Mussolini a hopeless unknown.

The events that three years later—through a new and more radical metamorphosis of his political personality, denying his libertarian, democratic and individualistic convictions—led Mussolini to conquer power as the undemocratic leader of a militia party, and to the founding of a regime totalitarian, were not contained, even in embryo, in the Fascism of 1919.

Mussolini and the Fascism of 1919 as revolutionaries and anti-capitalists are a historiographic legend still present. As is the legend of 1919 as a revolutionary year, although for twelve months, there was much talk of revolution in the continent that had been the epicentre of the Great War. The war itself was exalted (or deprecated) as a revolution, because it had disrupted an international political structure, causing the birth of new republican states on the rubble of age-old autocratic empires. Movements and parties behind communist, nationalist, internationalist, independence revolutions swarmed everywhere in Europe in 1919. Despite this, it was not a revolutionary year, if by revolution we mean the conquest of power by a new political class, the overthrow of an existing regime, the establishment of a new regime or a new state. Revolutionary was 1917, with the two revolutions in Russia, in February and October, which had brought down the existing regime and created a new regime, and with the birth of new independent states on the ruins of the Tsarist empire. Revolutionary was 1918, in the last weeks before the end of the Great War, when new independent states were created by the new ruling classes of the nations freed from the collapse of the Habsburg Empire. Indeed, there were revolutionary attempts in 1919, as well, two in Germany, one in Hungary, all inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution, but they were cut short after a few weeks by the armed repression of anti-Bolshevik forces. Since then, there has not been another communist revolution in Europe.

If it was not revolutionary, 1919 was nevertheless a convulsive year. In all the countries that had participated in the Great War, there were violent street unrest, general strikes, riots, which sometimes resulted in armed clashes. But in no European country, violent convulsions resulted in the revolutionary imposition of a new regime with a new ruling class. Among the winners, Italy was the country most affected by violent convulsions.

The Socialist Party agitated the masses by exalting the Bolshevik Revolution, but did nothing in 1919 to start it also in Italy. His revolutionary impetus was unleashed in the general strikes, and in November 1919, he was content to conquer 156 seats in the Chamber by the electoral way, thus becoming the largest party in parliament. The second party in parliament, with 100 deputies, was the Italian People's Party, founded by Don Luigi Sturzo in January 1919, against the liberal and secular state.

Thus, at the end of 1919, the only revolution that really happened in Italy passed through the ballot boxes. It was a peaceful revolution that ended the hegemony of the liberal ruling class in power since the birth of the Italian state in 1861, leaving the Italians' future full of unknowns.

It is said that nature does not jump, but history, the work of man, sometimes makes sudden and unpredictable catastrophic leaps.

[Translated from Italian by Constantin Iordachi]

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Approaching Generic Fascism from the Margins: On the Uses of ‘Palingenesis’ in the Romanian Context

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APPROACHING GENERIC FASCISM FROM THE MARGINS: ON THE USES OF ‘PALINGENESIS’ IN THE ROMANIAN CONTEXT

In 2015, a law passed by the Romanian Parliament amended and supplemented existing legislation (Emergency Ordinance 31/2002 and Law 107/2006) banning organisations and symbols with a fascist, racist, or xenophobic character by explicitly including the legionary movement in interwar Romania within its remit. Introducing important clarifications aimed at preventing selective Holocaust denial, Law 217/2015 also stated the following: “the Legionary Movement denotes a fascist organisation in Romania that was active in the period 1927–1941 under the denominations ‘The Legion of the Archangel Michael’, ‘The Iron Guard’, and the ‘All for the Country Party’”.¹ As I have written elsewhere, the new legislation, dubbed ‘the anti-legionary law’, sparked considerable controversy within Romania, while being positively received abroad and

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by the scholarly community working on fascism and the Holocaust.² Notable among the reactions against Law 217/2015 was a statement of the History section of the Romanian Academy, specifying that “the Legionary Movement cannot be qualified as ‘fascist’, insofar as *it does not meet, through the elements of doctrine that it adopted and promoted, a fascist ideological character*”.³ Such a statement appears completely ignorant of, and directly contradicts virtually all of the specialist literature published recently on the subject. The latter, with almost no exceptions, is largely in agreement in firmly including the legionary movement in the category of fascist movements and organisations, with its ‘fascist ideological character’ considered largely a given in ever-more sophisticated and detailed discussions that integrate the Romanian case study in the history of interwar European fascism. This consensus, I contend, owes a lot to Roger Griffin’s notion of generic fascism, his succinct definition thereof, and the ‘new consensus’ it engendered in studies of fascism. If the short introduction above aims to show that such issues are not of mere scholarly interest, but have direct bearing on memory politics and salient contemporary debates, my chapter focuses on the influence that Roger’s conceptual approach to fascism has had on my own work on interwar Romania. Since covering *all* the ways in which my research is indebted to Roger’s (e.g. the revolutionary character of fascism, its modernism, etc.), more perhaps than to anyone else’s, would far exceed the scope of a short piece, in the following I zoom in on one element of his definition of generic fascism, the palingenetic element of fascist ideology, that has significantly inspired my own approach to the ideology and practices of the ‘Legion of the Archangel Michael’.

‘THE RESURRECTION OF THE NATION’

The main focus of my work to date has been on the link between legionary anti-Semitism and the movement’s fascist character. I drew on Roger Griffin’s initial definition of generic fascism as “*a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism*”⁴ to argue that, despite the influence of a ‘tradition’ of anti-Semitism in Romania before the First World War, the specific radicalism of legionary anti-Semitism was directly related to that of the ‘regenerative’ nationalist project the movement put forth. Following yet another ‘Griffinian’ exhortation, itself inspired by the earlier one of George Mosse, I have done so by attempting to ‘take fascism

seriously', to pay due attention to legionaries' own statements and (self-)representations, in which, I argue, the palingenetic component features prominently. Although the three components of Griffin's 'fascist minimum' are to be considered together to act as a definition of fascism, and although Constantin Iordachi has convincingly shown that the legionary movement cannot be said to have a monopoly on palingenetic nationalism in Romania,⁵ a focus on the element of 'rebirth' in legionary ideology immediately presents some advantages.

First, it allows us to distinguish between the legionary movement and other radical right organisations in interwar Romania (the League of National Christian Defence or the National Christian Party), as well King Carol II's own version of conservative right-wing authoritarianism, despite the latter's fascist trappings or direct imitations of legionary practices.⁶ Wherever one looks for the self-identification of the legionary movement and its proclaimed distinction from all previous and contemporary nationalist organisations, one comes across the term 'new'. Reminiscing over the early plans of establishing the movement in Văcărești prison, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu referred to the initial conception as "*a beginning of life*". It was something new, something completely different, in terms of thinking, organisation, and plan of action, from everything we had thought before. It was the beginning of a world".⁷ The statement above denotes the comprehensiveness and radicalism of the legionary regenerative project, seen as a "new beginning",⁸ a complete rupture in Romanian political space and beyond. While this is an important observation in its own right, and, as we have seen earlier, a consequential one for contemporary politics, it further allows us to categorically include the Legion in the 'party family' of European fascist organisations. Legionary intellectuals like Mihail Polihroniade and Mircea Eliade were indeed keen on seeing the Legion as the Romanian expression of the revolutions sweeping over Europe (for the former) or the world (for the latter), "synchronic with the post-war European political movement" and at the same time superior to it.⁹ In turn, as Iordachi has also noted, this avoids the pitfalls resulting from a focus on the 'exceptionalism' of the legionary movement as derived from either "Balkan/Central European backwardness or Orthodox specificity",¹⁰ 'Orientalising' tendencies well summarised in Ernst Nolte's surprise at encountering the "subtle cultural critique" that was fascism (!) as "a vital political factor in Romania, at the edge of Europe".¹¹

That said, the palingenetic elements in legionary ideology did differ in their Christian Orthodox interpretation from notions of ‘rebirth’ and ‘regeneration’ put forth elsewhere. The first manifesto of the Legion, posted in Iași a week after its foundation, on 30 June 1927, was entitled “Appeal to the bearers of the new spirit of the times” and concluded with the words: “when your voice and your arm will call out the victory, Romania will resurrect”.¹² The birth of the Legion thus coincided with the notion of legionary rebirth, always formulated in its Christian variant, as ‘resurrection’. The emphasis on spiritual, moral regeneration was ubiquitous in the movement’s rhetoric and explicitly invoked as its distinguishing feature from other European fascist organisations and regimes by its leadership. In ‘The Nest Leader’s Manual’, Codreanu’s book of instructions for legionaries, the theme of palingenesis was developed along clear spiritual lines: “*The new man*, or the renewed nation, proposes a great *spiritual* renewal, a great spiritual revolution of the entire people, i.e. *a resistance to the prevalent spiritual climate of today* and a categorical offensive against this trend”.¹³

Far from being a ‘bizarre’, ‘exotic’ feature, this is instead to be read as indicative of the movement’s native character, in contrast to the many imitations of Italian Fascism or German National Socialism that proliferated in interwar Romania. In this respect, the movement was at once attuned to the ‘Orthodoxism’ prevalent in interwar Romanian culture and distinct from it in its primarily political rather than cultural stance.¹⁴ At his 1938 trial, Codreanu was very explicit about this emphasis on spirituality and the resulting position he identified for the Legion within European fascism. Italian Fascism’s focus on the state was identified with the “coat”, the exterior form, National Socialism with “the blood” and “the body”, whereas “legionarism” was located “in the soul of the individual and the nation, without neglecting either the idea of state or that of race; however, our essential point, the root, is placed here, in the soul”. In the view of the Legion’s ‘Captain’, this accounted for “the superiority of the legionary idea over Fascism and National Socialism”.¹⁵ This emphasis on the role of spirituality in legionary ideology touches upon yet another important debate in fascism studies, and one in which Roger Griffin also weighed in, including with reference to the legionary movement.¹⁶ Regarding the issue of ‘political religion’, however, despite significant contributions in this respect, much work remains to be done on the Romanian case, not least on unpacking the religious content of the legionary notion of palingenesis.

ENEMIES OF THE RESURRECTION

One of the (legitimate) criticisms of Roger Griffin's definition of 'generic fascism' is that it paid relatively little attention to the violence of fascist movements and regimes, focusing instead on its mobilising myth. This is understandable at a time when studies of fascism had been dominated by a focus on what Stanley Payne in his typological definition identified as the "fascist negations",¹⁷ i.e. the things fascists were opposed to rather than stood for, and on the destruction and violence wrought by fascist regimes, at the expense of the elements employed to rally supporters to their cause, even in inauspicious circumstances. In conceptual terms, the implications of the fascist regenerative myth for movements' and regimes' attitudes toward their 'others' were convincingly spelled out by Aristotle Kallis in his focus on the "eliminationist drive" of European fascism.¹⁸ The case of the legionary movement appears as a very interesting one along these lines, for while the Legion was not directly responsible for perpetrating the genocide against Jews and Roma during the Second World War, having been disbanded following the failed legionary rebellion of 1941, I argue in my work that the legionary radicalisation of anti-Semitism played a major role in "desensitising the general population towards the plight of Romanian Jews".¹⁹ This, in turn, was extremely consequential for both state policy and local participation in the perpetration of the Holocaust in Romania.²⁰

Following Kallis' notion of "rebirth-through-cleansing" as "the primary distinguishing feature of the fascist vision of regeneration",²¹ itself indebted to both Roger's and Michael Mann's work,²² I argued in my work for the centrality of anti-Semitism to the Legion's palingenetic impetus. The introduction of the representation of the 'Jew' as a figure of external agency resolved for legionaries the apparent paradox of an ultra-nationalist movement in opposition to and opposed by a political establishment that was itself national and nationalist. Consequently, its opponents, including those making up the successive interwar Romanian governments, were depicted as either 'blind' to the influence of the Jews or 'traitors' directly in their service. Such an interpretive scheme thus allowed for radical denunciations of the political establishment without inflicting damage to the notion of a harmonious and unitary 'nation'. In this respect, the "resolution of the Jewish problem", which Codreanu identified in a 1937 circular as "the historic mission of our generation",²³ represented the precondition of the announced 'resurrection'.

However, the representation of the ‘Jew’ was not merely the premise of the decadence legionaries identified in Romanian society and beyond, but an integral part of its specifically fascist vision of radical transformation. While the legacy of nineteenth-century Romanian anti-Semitism provided the Legion with a respectable ‘tradition’ they could (and did) invoke,²⁴ legionary anti-Semitism was both more comprehensive and more virulent than any of its previous ideological manifestations. Interestingly, the movement added little to the Romanian anti-Semitic repertoire in terms of content, particularly when compared with the student movements from which it originated and with the formative influence of the so-called patriarch of Romanian anti-Semitism, A.C. Cuza.²⁵ Instead, its specific radicalism derived from the palingenetic drive that consistently posited the Legion’s own novelty against the perceived crisis and “collapse of the old system”, in an antithesis of ‘old’ and ‘new’ (equivalent to “evil”—or even “satanic” for the fervently religious Moța—and “good” or “Godly”) that was a constant theme of legionary ideology.²⁶ In an unpublished letter sent to Cuza from Grenoble in 1927 announcing his split from the League of National Christian Defence, Codreanu acknowledged his mentor’s merits as “a theoretician of the national idea” but denounced his inability to organise a “national movement” for action—arguing for “integral discipline” and “the primacy of deeds” in the new organisation he planned to establish.²⁷ Cuza’s calls for a parliamentary resolution of the ‘Jewish question’ reversing emancipation and returning to the pre-war legal discrimination were seen as inadequate and insufficient by a movement that rejected parliamentary democracy altogether. As Mihail Polihroniade explained, the solution could only come from “an organically national action, within which the Semitic problem is integrated with the other problems to solve. A decisive, determined action that would overturn the old order, beginning with the parliament so dear to Mr. A.C. Cuza, and would create a new Romanian world”.²⁸ For a movement that spurned political programmes and called instead for the creation of a ‘new man’, recourse to parliamentary solutions was proof of “fraternising with the foreigner enemy”, as Cuza’s “glove of scientific dialectic and whip of parliamentary democracy” was contrasted with the legionary “hammer of fire that would destroy from the top the satanic iconostasis of the Judeo-masonic temple erected on the crushed chest of this nation”.²⁹ The legionary ideological framework saw ‘the old’ as inevitably contaminated by the ‘Judaic spirit’, and consequently unredeemable—impossible to reform, the old world had to perish for the new one to be born.

Thus, if the Legion did not contribute much to the *topoi* of Romanian anti-Semitism, it radicalised it by the emphasis placed on the actions needed to address the ‘Jewish question’, inspired by its palingenetic vision of rebirth and regeneration. Regarding the latter, it is important to note that, in line with the emphasis the movement placed on spirituality, the Legion posited religion rather than race as the criterion for exclusion. First off, converted Jews could be found in the ranks of the movement, even occupying leadership positions—Vasile Noveanu, legionary commander and head of the movement in Arad County, legionary instructor Cătălin Ropală (brother of Ana Maria Marin, the wife of Vasile Marin and herself part of Codreanu’s personal inner circle), and composer Paul Constantinescu are among the most prominent such examples.³⁰ Second, the emphasis on understanding anti-Semitism along the lines of religion rather than race is clearly visible in the rhetoric of the actors in question. In Ion I. Moța’s correspondence with the *Welt-Dienst*, he saw the limit of Nazi racial anti-Semitism with religion and its “divine essence, which we acquire through revelation and not through the genius of the race”.³¹ When comparing legionary ideology and Nazism, to which they referred with the common contemporary Romanian phrase ‘*Hitlerism*’, legionary intellectuals consistently found the latter wanting in view of its ‘materialism’. In contrast, wrote the prominent Romanian interwar sociologist and philosopher Ernest Bernea, “our nationalism is founded on a principle of the purest, deepest and universal spirituality, i.e. our Christian Orthodoxy”. The corollary, Bernea concluded, was that “the specificity of the anti-Semitism of Romanian nationalism” was a “more humane, more positive way of viewing the entire problem of nationalism”.³²

Despite its grounding in religion rather than race, legionary anti-Semitism was hardly ‘more humane’ or ‘positive’ than the Nazi variant thereof. Another way in which the legionary movement contributed to radicalising anti-Semitism was through the typically fascist ideological tendency toward synthesis.³³ Consequently, the representation of the ‘Jew’ legionaries conjured brought together disparate semantic content into one synthetic, abstract, and all-powerful image of an arch-enemy of the legionary palingenetic vision that had very little to do with the actual Jewish communities in Romania. As I have shown in my work, in legionary rhetoric Jews were blamed for communism, liberalism, democracy, individualism, corruption, poverty, alcoholism, promiscuity, social inequality, cultural backwardness, immorality, atheism, rationalism,

intellectualism, humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism, and even environmental degradation.³⁴ In a book entitled *Nation and Army*, Gheorghe Ciorogaru could simultaneously blame the militarism of the interwar period on “Judaic communism” while holding ‘Jews’ responsible for the “spiritual decay and rottenness” producing “well-mannered pacifists, degenerate and frail people”.³⁵ A two-part review of this book by Dinu Paltin examined Ciorogaru’s analysis of militarism and pacifism separately, only to conclude by unambiguously linking both to the “virus of the Judaic demon”.³⁶ Similar apparent contradictions abounded, as the ‘Jew’ was portrayed simultaneously as a liberal democrat and a totalitarian communist, a capitalist and its communist enemy, religious and atheist, cosmopolitan and nationalist. “Here is the cause! *Judaism*, in all its complexity. The *cause of all causes!*” exclaimed legionary commander Ion Banea.³⁷ This disparate and even contradictory semantic content was held together by the very act of naming ‘the Jew’, identifying a common enemy unto which all the problems compounding the pervasive decadence legionaries identified in contemporary Romania were displaced.

The ‘solution’ to such all-encompassing degeneration could only lie with regeneration, and the synthetic image of its enemy—always more consistent than the legionaries’ vague plans—served to uphold the Legion’s paligenetic vision and was consequently an integral part of it. Just as Holly Case has identified Hitler as a “question bundler” in an “age of questions” starting in the nineteenth century and concluding with the ‘Final Solution’,³⁸ the Legion promised to ‘solve’ all such ‘questions’ in the Romanian context—and beyond—by literally rooting out their alleged *prima causa*. In an interview given to a British-Jewish correspondent for *The Daily Herald*, Alexander Easterman, in 1938, Codreanu was clear on this issue: “I stand for the elimination without exception of Jews from the national life of Romania”.³⁹ The populism of the Legion and its popularity in 1930s Romania ensured that such a radical ‘eliminationist’ vision was mainstreamed among the Romanian population, legitimating violence and removing ethical taboos on its perpetration, without putting a dent on the movement’s calls for moral regeneration. As Kallis argues, the “populist anti-Semitism” of fascist movements, projecting “a single ‘chimeric’ assertion that was far more potent than the sum of its constituent parts”, extended their “licence to hate” and allowed them to “contemplate a future without ‘others’ as both part and precondition of a positive regenerative ideal condition”.⁴⁰

PALINGENETIC TEMPORALITIES

The idea of a future without ‘others’ brings me to another important part of my work for which Roger Griffin’s conceptual interpretation of generic fascism has been extremely influential: the temporalities of the Legion’s fascist palingenetic project. In an earlier publication, I argued that the alternative temporality put forth by the legionary movement was not “an epiphenomenon to its ideological structure of pure scholarly interest, but a central aspect of its fascist ideology, a vision grounded on an unreal mythical edifice that was no less real in its murderous consequences”.⁴¹ Drawing on those insights, as well as on Roger’s notion of “fascism as a temporal revolution”,⁴² I believe that exploring fascist temporalities represents another fruitful path of enquiry into the ramifications of fascism’s palingenetic ‘mythic core’.

To begin with, even a cursory look at the fascists’ pronouncements on time helps settle the old debate on the reactionary vs. revolutionary character of fascism, decisively in favour of the latter. Both the futural orientation of fascist ideology and the idea of a complete rupture with a decadent present are ubiquitous in legionary rhetoric, as they are in that of other fascist movements and regimes. The legionary future was both imminent and redemptive of Romania’s past and present: “the resurrection of our nation is seething underground and it will soon erupt, enlightening with its light our entire future and our entire dark past”.⁴³ Since a bright future of legionary making was consistently juxtaposed with present decay, acceleration toward the latter appeared imperative, acting as a mobilising factor. Agency was key in ensuring the ‘right’ future would come to be, instead of its “enslavement” by the Legion’s ubiquitous Jewish enemy.⁴⁴ Such agency was both invoked by a legionary elite laying claim to a knowledge transcending time and demanded of its members, whose participation in the (historic) legionary revolution was necessary for its success. “It is *your* time: Come!” read one of Codreanu’s earliest appeals.⁴⁵ As some of the letters from the readers published in the first legionary newspaper show, they did not fall on deaf ears—someone self-identifying only as “a village accountant” wrote back: “You are the hope of our tomorrow. Our future and the future of our children we lay at your feet”.⁴⁶

Yet fascist temporalities were much more complex than the acceleration of time toward an imminent redemptive future, as anyone familiar with the notion of a ‘thousand-year Reich’ knows. The end point of the

fascist regenerative project was a temporal standstill, an eternity of plenitude that was directly linked to that of the nation.⁴⁷ A concept of the nation as eternal was indeed fundamental to legionary ideology, and it involved two distinct, yet related features. On the one hand, it posited a 'natural', pre-historical existence of 'the Romanians' and, in doing so, laid a claim to land, rendering a highly contested territory incontestable. For Codreanu, in contrast to all 'others' who 'came later', "only one nation did not come from anywhere. That nation is us. We were born in the dawn of time on this land, together with the oaks and the firs".⁴⁸ However, the nation was much more to Codreanu than continuity in a certain territory, regardless of how important this was in itself for a nationalism that sought to preserve rather than expand the interwar borders of 'Greater Romania'. Its eternal existence collapsed past, present, and future into one entity, as the nation comprised "1) All the Romanians presently alive. 2) All the souls of the dead and the graves of the ancestors. 3) All those who will be born Romanians".⁴⁹ Such a temporal vision of the nation is certainly removed from Benedict Anderson's famous notion of the synchronicity of the modern nation, its members moving simultaneously through a Benjaminian empty, homogenous time.⁵⁰ In Codreanu's understanding, the nation's simultaneity is no longer simply shared by its members in a linear, chronological present, but cuts across temporal registers, able to draw on select moments and characters from the past while presciently projecting into the future. In that, it is rather reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's 'messianic time' that Anderson associates with pre-modern, pre-national temporality and contrasts with the time of the nation. Moreover, it is palingenesis that acts as the trigger activating the nation's eternity in the now, its simultaneity-across- rather than along-time, as the idea of rebirth implies recovering something that already existed in a "non-restorationist sense",⁵¹ thus bridging past and future in a present infused with both.

Interestingly, Dorian Bell draws a similar conclusion in his analysis of Maurice Barrès' temporal vision of nineteenth-century French nationalism, where "steps in the nation's evolution proceed both as increments added in homogeneous time and as tiny messianic flashes in which each event prefigures the next to produce an instantaneous now where past, present, and future coincide".⁵² This synthesis of messianic and homogenous in understanding the time of the nation, perhaps a point where the 'ultra-' in fascist nationalism marks a specific difference from liberal nationalism, appears all the more important since Barrès is considered by

Zeev Sternhell as one of the precursors of fascist ideology, and he was also recognised as such by Moța in the Romanian context.⁵³ However, and in line with my main research interest, this revised temporality of the Legion's paligenetic (ultra-)nationalism immediately recalls anti-Semitic projections of the 'Jew' as a privileged figure for this simultaneity-across-time, indebted to notions of Jewish 'chosenness' presupposing a nation that is always already messianic.⁵⁴ Once again, legionary anti-Semitism appears inextricably linked to the movement's paligenetic drive, both premise and part of its regenerative project. Alon Confino has argued that the Nazis' temporal vision required the extermination of Jews because they "represented time, symbolizing evil historical origins that had to be eradicated for Nazi civilization to arise".⁵⁵ This, I argue, is only half the story, as the 'Jews' also stood for the same messianism that fascists invoked for their respective 'chosen' peoples, acting as the original blueprint of a national temporality that was (historical) time-transcending.

The Legion's temporality fuelled the movement's specific murderous radicalism. The "perfume of eternity", as philosopher Emil Cioran called it,⁵⁶ symbolically absolved legionary assassins of their crimes, as their 'deeds' were integrated into the nation's timeless existence. The statements made at their trial for the murder of the legionary defector Mihail Stelescu by the *Decemviri*, a team of ten legionary assassins, presented their crime as legitimised by illustrious figures from the nation's history, aligned with its atemporal 'destiny', while simultaneously inaugurating "the new century".⁵⁷ Not just mere metaphor, statements such as these are frequently encountered in legionary rhetoric, collapsing the temporal registers into a *kairos* (in its acceptance of proper or opportune time) that was central to the movement's call for immediate and radical action. This allowed the discarding of personal responsibility for violence, made legitimate by the simultaneity of past and future in the kairotic present and its consequent 'power' to reshape time in both directions, without invalidating the legionaries' claims to a higher morality. In the concluding lines of his programmatic memoirs, Codreanu urged his followers to forgive those who had harmed them personally, in the spirit of Christianity, but not those who harmed the nation. The latter transcended individual existence and endowed it with meaning, so that "the swords you bear are of the nation. In her name you bear them. In her name you will use them to punish her enemies: ruthless and unforgiving. Thus and only thus will you prepare a healthy future for this nation".⁵⁸ Along the lines of transforming hatred from "wicked vice" to "*legitimate duty*" and thus

circumventing existing taboos on violence,⁵⁹ the Legion's palingenetic temporal vision went a long way indeed, and the sense of agency one acquired in working to secure a bright future for Romania rendered it into a powerful mobilising factor.

Much more remains to be said about the importance of fascist temporal visions—or, alternatively, “regimes of historicity”⁶⁰—in fuelling transnational cooperation between movements and regimes in the interwar period. In my next major research project, I argue that fascist temporalities were central to fascist ideology and a salient aspect for its success in certain contexts rather than others. Such notions of temporal revolution were meant to simultaneously restructure space, both internally, within societies—where notions of empty, homogenous times were meant to be replaced by the participatory, ‘special time’ of fascist ritual—and externally, where they were meant to subvert and eventually destroy a geopolitical order underpinned by Western colonialism. Moreover, this has broader implications for a discussion of the dialectical relationship of fascism with the project of Western modernity fascists decisively opposed, given the shared future orientation of both messianic and progressive time. Looking at the extent to which fascist organisations shared certain temporal visions and at their importance in informing political programmes would help us understand the “global authoritarian moment”⁶¹ that came to be in the interwar period, as well as potentially drawing alarm signals regarding the contemporary global resurgence of an authoritarian right.

TRANSNATIONALISING PALINGENESIS

The above brings me to yet another dimension of the importance of the palingenetic element, i.e. its role in understanding the international links forged by otherwise ultra-nationalist movements and regimes often assumed to spurn all forms of internationalism. In a chapter I have written on this topic, I dealt with Ion I. Moța's international activity and his specifically fascist views of a European or world order, as well as with the importance he placed on anti-Semitism for legitimising such transnational cooperation.⁶² For a movement keen to pronounce its native character and its difference from Italian Fascism and German Nazism, for both ideological and pragmatic purposes, rather than ‘fascism’ as such, both self-definitions and perceived affinities with organisations and regimes abroad were expressed in terms of a “brotherhood” between

“movements of national regeneration”.⁶³ This aspect emphasises once again the importance of Roger’s insight about the palingenetic character of generic fascism for understanding the legionary movement’s visions of international order.

Seeking to reconstruct the agency of legionaries by way of “taking fascist self-descriptions and self-representations more seriously than previously”⁶⁴ reveals acute observations that parallel the prevailing consensus in the field. As such, when exposed to numerous international volunteers from a variety of organisations during the Spanish Civil War, Moța was most impressed with the Spanish *Falange*, which he identified as the organisation that “resembles the most our Legion in Romania”.⁶⁵ Other legionary assessments of radical right movements and parties, like Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party or the Austrian *Heimwehr* and *Vaterländische Front*, also appear right on the mark when compared to the contemporary scholarship. While partly appreciated (the Slovak organisation especially due to its clerical element, given the importance of religion in legionary ideology as well) as potential allies in the struggle against common enemies, they were nevertheless identified as too conservative to be considered fascist.⁶⁶ The movement’s foreign policy expert, Mihail Polihroniade, identified the Legion as “doubtlessly the Romanian ‘representative’ of fascism and national-socialism”.⁶⁷ Police reports closely monitoring the organisation’s activity concurred: a synthesis report from April 1932 concluded by stating that the “nuance of the party is a type of fascism, but more radical due to the severe means it employs”.⁶⁸

The emphasis on “the resurrection of the nation in the name of the saviour Jesus Christ”⁶⁹ made the Legion a popular model for other European fascist movements. The Estonian and Latvian organisations sent delegations to Romania to establish contact with the movement and learn from its practices that had proven successful in mobilising an overwhelmingly agrarian population.⁷⁰ In Poland, the legionary blend of extreme nationalism and religion was emulated by Bolesław Piasecki, leader of a number of radical right organisations and eventually of the fascist *ONR-Falanga*.⁷¹ Beyond Eastern Europe, Codreanu was a model for both the French and the German local fascist organisations in Alsace, albeit for different reasons.⁷² Despite their explicitly local character and deliberate attempts to distance themselves from the national movements in either France or Germany, both movements envisaged a “new Europe” created by the movements of “national awakening”, and in this respect

the *Bauernbund* thought the Iron Guard represented “the cutting edge of ‘national renewal’”.⁷³

After his death, Codreanu’s spirituality and “warrior asceticism” that had profoundly impressed Julius Evola during his visit to Romania in 1938 were popularised in post-war Italy and beyond.⁷⁴ With the Italian and German models unacceptable after 1945, a relatively unknown fascist leader who had been assassinated in 1938 and thus had no associations with the Second World War or the Holocaust could represent a convenient way to circumvent moral and legal prohibitions on the display of fascist symbols or the glorification of fascist movements. This is most explicitly visible in Codreanu’s current recuperation by the alt-right in the United States, whose exponents make references to his commitment to Christianity in an attempt to disassociate themselves from accusations of being neo-Nazis, while appealing to a membership that itself places value on religion. The organiser of the white supremacist Charlottesville rally in 2017, Matthew Heimbach, is a self-avowed admirer of Codreanu and the legionary movement, and a convert to Orthodoxy during one of his visits to Romania. In a 2015 interview, he stated that he considers his “biggest spiritual inspiration to be the Legion of St Michael the Archangel”, claiming that the “Legion’s mission was to save souls through the revitalization of the Orthodox Church in Romania”.⁷⁵ The alt-right Canadian media commentator and candidate for mayor of Toronto, Faith Goldy, promoted Codreanu’s programmatic memoir, *For My Legionaries*, which the Southern Poverty Law Center considers to be one of the “canonical works of global fascism”.⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

In the only other publication so far focusing explicitly on the importance of palingenesis in the Romanian context, Constantin Iordachi warned against the tendency to ‘Orientalise’ the legionary movement by emphasising its alleged ‘Balkan exceptionalism’.⁷⁷ Long considered a marginal, peripheral, or anomalous case of fascism in interwar Europe, I have consistently argued in my work that the legionary movement is anything but. The third-largest fascist movement in Europe in terms of membership and the only one that came to power without direct support from either Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany, the Legion of the Archangel Michael is an integral part of the European, or indeed global fascist moment, and failing to recognise it as such is only testament to enduring Orientalisms in

European historiography, not to any analytical clarity. As a case that both confirms the main assumptions of Roger Griffin's definition of generic fascism and highlights its relevance, possibly even beyond its specific historical context, it should be evident from the presentation above that the Legion was also perceived as such and even seen as a model by other fascists, in the interwar period and beyond.

While my argument here is in the main fully in agreement with Iordachi's, there are however certain aspects where we part ways. Instead of a continuity with early nineteenth-century Romanian (and European) messianic nationalism, I read the legionary palingenesis as much less indebted to a nationalist tradition that was occasionally invoked for purposes of legitimacy, but never genuinely respected. And even if I agree with Iordachi that the legionary palingenesis did not introduce much new content to "the Romantic doctrine of messianic nationalism",⁷⁸ I hope the argument above convincingly shows that its political aims were radically different than those of its predecessors, and that they reshaped the very notion of regeneration or rebirth the legionaries espoused. Moreover, the wholesale rejection of 'the old' also implied a decisive denunciation of the peripheral position Romania occupied in the world, and a re-positioning at the centre of the national revolutions promising a new arrangement of the international world order. The intellectuals' insistence on the world-historical significance of the legionary revolution—"leaving behind Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. *And in the Balkans no less!*" for Emil Cioran⁷⁹—can be thus understood as attempts to transcend and redeem the traumas of peripherality and 'backwardness'.⁸⁰

The legionaries' commitment to a radical re-arrangement of international order in alliance with revisionist states cannot be understood in terms of pragmatic foreign policy objectives, but only by factoring in the importance of ideology and of ideologically motivated political affinities. Given that the post-Versailles international order was highly favourable to Romania, the Legion's opposition to it, as well as the condemnation of its guarantors—primarily Britain and France—was made in the name of commitment to a fascist revolution, within which they believed they could play a leading role. Much as we can bring to bear our hindsight knowledge on just how misguided such aspirations were, it is clear that such ideological considerations were especially important in civilisational terms for the legionaries, whose 'resurrection of Romania' was meant to be part and parcel of a broader fascist regeneration of the world.

Approaching generic fascism from ‘the margins’, such an interpretation allows for placing Roger Griffin’s emphasis on the palingenetic component of fascist ideology squarely at the centre of attempts to understand transnational fascism and its visions of the global.

NOTES

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The History of Czech Fascism: A Reappraisal

Jakub Drábik

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CZECH/SLOVAK FASCISMS AND THE ‘NEW CONSENSUS’

I first met Professor Roger Griffin during a research trip to Oxford Brookes that began in September 2013 and ran for two semesters. At the time, I was interested in the British Union of Fascists and was writing a dissertation on BUF propaganda. While in Oxford, I attended Griffin’s course on “The Evolution of Fascism in the Twentieth Century”. During one of the lectures on various abortive and para-fascist movements in Central and Eastern Europe, Professor Griffin referred to Czechoslovakia as a “black hole” of fascism studies, as there was virtually no adequate research available in the English language. This was certainly true. Although at the time (and even more so today) many Eastern European fascist movements in Central and Eastern Europe were well researched in the Western historiography, Czech and Slovak fascism had been largely ignored. The only comprehensive monograph at the time was written by Kelly in 1995,¹ but it had no theoretical or conceptual framework and soon became obsolete. Stanley Payne devoted only two short pages to Czech fascism in *A History of Fascism 1914–45*, his main work

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on the subject.² Griffin mentions fascism in Czechoslovakia only briefly in his own work and suggests that it was successfully marginalised by the liberal Czechoslovak system.³ In short, the works available in English are either old or obsolete (written in the 1970s and 1980s⁴), or too general and lacking in detail.

Being born in Slovakia—but living and studying in Prague at the time—this state of affairs immediately captured my attention. The history of fascism in Czechoslovakia is a history of three very different fascist projects: the Czech, Slovak, and Sudeten-German. Although I knew a good deal about Konrad Henlein's *Sudetendeutsche Partei* and the *Karpátendeutsche Partei* and their Nazification in the 1930s, I had only limited knowledge of Czech and Slovak fascism. We were never taught about it at school or university (except that some academics claimed that wartime Slovakia was a fascist state) and my knowledge of the most significant Czechoslovak fascist movement, the *Národní obec fašistická* (the NOF; the National Fascist Community) and its leader, the former legionnaire general Radola Gajda, was vague, to say the least. I knew some of the works that dealt with fascism in Czechoslovakia, namely those of Ivo Pejšoch⁵ and Tomáš Pašák,⁶ but both these works, like most of the literature written in Czech and Slovak, were purely narrative, descriptive rather than analytical, lacked any basic understanding of fascism, and were not up to date with the latest research in comparative studies. More importantly, Czech and Slovak historians seemed to agree that Czechoslovak fascism had no ideology, or at best a very primitive ideology or one without substance. For example, Miroslav Gregorovič, author of one of the most comprehensive surveys of Czech fascism to date (published in 1995), claimed that Czech fascism failed to progress beyond imitating its Italian role model and that its “theoretical production seem[ed] to be astonishingly primitive”.⁷ Czech historians almost universally claimed that Czech fascists were little more than non-conceptual fools and thugs with a “grotesque” programme and no ideology.⁸

There were reasons for the lack of a vigorous Czech and Slovak historiography of fascism. As explained by Constantin Iordachi in his historiographical overview of the literature on fascism in Central and Eastern Europe,⁹ given the unfavourable conditions for the emergence of fascism in Czechoslovakia, the existence of native Czech fascism¹⁰ appeared a contradiction, even an oxymoron. Of course, genuinely fascist movements were marginalised and effectively forced to the periphery of

the political spectrum and played no real role in Czechoslovak political life. More importantly, there still existed the myth of the “island of democracy”, of a country which was built on a purely democratic foundation and had no political or sociological conditions that allowed the emergence of fascism.¹¹ This perception, as well as the lack of access to primary sources, partially explains why the literature on the topic is so scarce. Another important factor is that as a result of decades of Soviet rule, Czech and Slovak historians have lacked the conceptual apparatus to make sense of their own extremist past.

The evolution of the historiography of fascism—from empirical approaches to “fresher” perspectives and more innovative and creative methodologies—almost completely by-passed Czech and Slovak historians interested in fascism. Since the emergence in the 1990s of what is now the not-so-new “new consensus”,¹² our perception of fascist movements has changed, and many scholars of fascism have started to take fascist movements in Central and Eastern Europe seriously. This “revolution” in fascist studies has had a direct impact on the way fascism and fascist movements are understood as a revolutionary variant of nationalism. However, most Czech and Slovak historians stubbornly ignored theories of fascism when reconstructing events from the interwar or wartime periods. Instead of bothering to engage with the fascists’ own understanding of their ideology, goals, and “missions”, most of our historians made do with simplistic descriptions of the histories of the various small fascist movements and eschewed any deeper kind of analysis.

Scholars from some post-communist Eastern European countries have slowly begun to tackle the topic and new research is constantly emerging.¹³ It is now widely recognised that “like conservatism, anarchism, liberalism, or ecologism, fascism is definable as an ideology with a specific ‘positive’, utopian vision of the ideal state of society, a vision which can assume a number of distinctive forms determined by local circumstances while retaining a core matrix of axioms”¹⁴ However, fascism in Czechoslovakia remains severely under-researched in both the Western and the Czech historiography and even something of a mystery. Similarly, the “cultural turn”¹⁵ in fascism studies has all but passed by Czech and Slovak academics. Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasised the cultural dimensions of fascism and maintained that studying these cultural manifestations is at least as important as studying the programmes, development, and successes and failures of fascist movements. There has, nonetheless, been no major reconsideration of Czech fascism, and the

most recent theories advanced in the field remain almost unknown in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.¹⁶

The first attempts to take the ideology of Czech fascism seriously were made by the controversial Czech psychologist and amateur historian Milan Nakonečný, who underscored the palingenetic nature of Czech fascism. He wrote about the ideological structure, at the centre of which was “a true religious pack, a belief in a threatening enemy, which activated certain types of personalities and forced them to aggressive activism”.¹⁷ Nakonečný’s concept of the ideology is too narrow, however, and somewhat manipulative of the reader. His works seem apologetic on behalf of Czech fascism, contain several factual and interpretational errors,¹⁸ and could even be considered historical revisionism.

From a methodological perspective, by far the most important works of the first decade of the twenty-first century were those by the Czech historian Pavel Kotlán, who was, and remains, one of the few historians who sought to define Czech fascism and grasp it conceptually and methodologically. He developed his thesis in two monographs, published in 2001¹⁹ and 2009,²⁰ in which he evaluates the practical and theoretical activities of the NOF and seeks to evaluate and define the NOF on the basis of the defining features of fascism. These include political style, characterised by placing the state over the individual; direct action; categorising people as either friends or enemies; the cult of the leader; myths and symbolism; and the “salvation” mission of fascism. He even came to his own definition of fascism (although it is somewhat reminiscent of Griffin’s thesis): “Fascism is a false offer of salvation made to a certain group, which is to be realized through the liquidation of the group labelled as the enemy. This ‘salvation’ can only take place by activating all the elements of life and through direct action directed by the infallible Leader”.²¹ Unfortunately, Kotlán’s attempts were not followed by wider scholarly debates on the history of Czech fascism. Except for a few scholars such as Miroslav Mareš²² and the Slovak historians Anton Hruboň²³ and Miloslav Szabó,²⁴ Czech historiography remains dominated by empirical approaches. Although Griffin’s work is now being discovered by scholars in Slovakia and Czech Republic—thanks to his lectures and participation in public discussions in both countries in recent years, as well as the translation of his *Modernism and Fascism* into Czech—the phenomenon of Czechoslovak fascism is still to be reconsidered in the light of the “new consensus”. Thus, after I completed my doctorate, I naturally switched my attention to Czech fascism, especially its most relevant movement, the NOF.

LET THE WELFARE OF THE MOTHERLAND BE OUR SUPREME LAW!

The history of the NOF has been extensively documented. Established in March 1926, it was led from January 1927 by the famous legionnaire general Radola Gajda. Soon after its establishment, it became the largest—and arguably the only influential—fascist party in Czechoslovakia. It attracted a rather larger amount of support in its early days, but the suggestion of the security services that it had as many as 200,000 members in 1926 is undoubtedly an exaggeration.²⁵ NOF was, however, torn apart by internal struggles as Gajda proved to be rather a weak political leader. Furthermore, throughout its existence, it suffered from major financial difficulties and the highly active and assertive anti-fascist policies of the state. It also gathered very little support in the Slovak part of the Republic as the far-right there was dominated by Hlinka's People's Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*, HSĽS). In the 1929 elections, the NOF won three seats in the national parliament, gaining 0.96% of the vote. In 1932, the party had between 40,000 and 50,000 members,²⁶ and in the next elections in 1935, it won 2.4% of the vote and gained six deputies. During the Munich period, the NOF was among the strongest advocates of a policy of national defence against Nazi Germany, which they saw as a direct threat to the existence of the Czech nation rather than a distant ideological relative with whom it would be possible to cooperate. The party was, however, dissolved soon afterwards by its leader.

Neither Gajda nor any other Czech fascist ideologue was able to produce a complex and coherent ideological view comparable to their German, Italian, or British counterparts. The NOF did, nonetheless, develop a specific ideological framework. It combined Czech ultra-nationalism and chauvinism with prejudice against Germans, Jews²⁷ and, to a certain degree, Hungarians (especially in the 1920s and in the Slovak parts of the Republic; this attitude changed in the 1930s). The NOF was also highly critical of the government and of democracy. Czech fascist rhetoric was also characterised by a hatred of Masaryk, Beneš, and the policies coming out of the “*Hrad*” (“the Castle”). The NOF looked to Mussolini's Italy for its inspiration. It campaigned for the abandonment of the nation's liberal democracy and the adoption of a fascist-style corporate state, and advocated the need for the moral, cultural and spiritual revival of the nation. The movement's motto, which was supposed to embody

the movement's values, was *Blaho vlasti budiš nám nejvyšším zákonem!* (Let the welfare of the Motherland be our supreme law!).

In his leaflet *Co je fašism a co chce* (What fascism is and what it wants) published in 1926, Zdeněk Zástěra, one of the founders of the movement, wrote:

Fascism breaks down everything unhealthy and incapable of life, regardless of whether the various political charlatans and houseboys like it or not ... it is not a reaction, as its opponents try to define it. On the contrary, it is a mighty march forward, full of power, flowing out of its positive relationship to all economic and political issues... It is not a destructive movement, but an eminently constructive movement, full of active power and honest appreciation of values... It turns mankind away from dull materialism and returns it to life.²⁸

In the introduction to the pamphlet *Základní idee fašistického vládního programu* (The basic ideas of a Fascist government programme; 1926), which served as a semi-official party programme, the goals of Czech fascism are described as follows:

Fascism is faced with two major challenges: the struggle with the existing criminalities, the corruption of the Communist-Jewish-German hydra, which is a negative task, and the construction of a new, purely national state that complies with all the required rights of the Czech nation, of the St. Wenceslas crown, and Slovaks in Slovakia. Everything must be done to achieve the noble goal of the united nation of Czechs and Slovaks.²⁹

At the heart of NOF ideology was the policy of pan-Slavism. The NOF hoped that after it had gained power, Czechoslovakia would join with Poland and other Slavic nations to form a great Slavic alliance that would overthrow communism in the Soviet Union and serve as a barrier to the German *drag-nach-osten*.³⁰ To this end, they envisioned a two-state Czechoslovak-Polish alliance called *Severoslávia*—North Slavia (alongside *Juhoslávia*—South Slavia), or even a greater Czechoslovak-Polish-Yugoslav alliance. The NOF tried to maintain contact with other fascist groups, most notably the Polish *Oboz Wielkiej Polski* [Great Poland Camp] and the Yugoslav ORJUNA, but apart from small-scale activities such as the distribution of NOF leaflets in Belgrade,³¹ there is no clear evidence of any contact with these organisations, and the plans for a massive pan-Slavic cooperation never materialised.

The NOF was very clearly anti-Semitic, although not as virulently so as National Socialism in Germany. Anti-Semitism was also often connected with anti-Bolshevism and remained one of the principal tenets of the party's ideology, political programme, and propaganda, throughout its existence. In the broader European context, there was also its struggle against the "left-wing menace" that was destroying Czech culture and other national cultures. As Vladimir Balthasar, one of the more prominent members of the NOF, put it,

socialism and communism on the one hand and international Jewry on the other made efforts to remove the borders between nations and deprive them of their will to compete, which is the only thing that leads to improvement... And in this sea of cultural internationalism ... fascism seeks to capture the islands still resisting the red surge, the islands of national cultures, as national cultures are the manometer of the living power and spiritual potency of the nation. Internationalism means the decadence of culture; a burning, rampant nationalism, the basis of prosperity.³²

Published in 1927, the book *Fašistický stát* (The fascist state) by Otakar Lebloch was one of the earliest contributions to Czech fascist ideology. Lebloch saw fascism as "revolutionized nationalism" ("*zrevolucionovaný nacionalismus*"), a movement of struggle against the surrounding disingenuous world. At the heart of his palingenetic vision of the rebirth and regeneration of the nation lay the belief that the fearfulness, perfidy, faithlessness and corruption of democracy had reached its peak. In his view, moral decay and bankruptcy were universal and the remedies proposed by politicians were simply lies:

The modern age, the age of discoveries and fantastic technological breakthrough brings wonders also in politics and it discovered the cure for the protracted political diseases: it is a revolutionized nationalism, which is starting a new and glorious era of world development after liberalism and socialism.³³

To articulate his vision, Lebloch used such concepts as *přestavba státu*—rebuilding of the state; *očista národa*—cleansing of the nation; and *morální obnova*—moral restoration. Lebloch's concept of fascism was formed by a mixture of native influences but it also shared the wider European fascist view of the need to revitalise decadent European society and head off the danger of communism.³⁴

One of the most influential ideologues of Czech fascism was Jan Scheinost,³⁵ a Catholic intellectual and journalist who declared his admiration for fascism long before joining the NOF. Like Lebloch and many other Czech fascist ideologues, Scheinost saw Czech fascists as part of the larger European struggle against Bolshevism and cultural, political, and economic decay. In the editorial for the very first edition of the fascist weekly magazine *Stěžeň* (The mast), he argued:

Fascism is a global idea, which was solemnly and in a truly Roman manner expressed by Western Europe to prevent its own fall... [It] is the latest manifestation of the European spirit, a blend of civilization as developed by Greek philosophy, the Roman state, and Christian religion. It is a work of this civilization and for this civilization, whose life is at risk in Moscow and now in Washington... Just as every global idea, even fascism is of universal value: its principles are universally valid, even if their application would not be the same everywhere and would be driven by the local climate and its individual colouring.³⁶

Scheinost was inspired by Catholic social thinking and to a lesser degree by contemporaries such as Charles Maurras, the leader and main ideologue of the French *Action Française*, the British writer G. K. Chesterton, and the French novelist and poet Leon Bloy.³⁷ Indeed, the inspiration for many of the ideas expressed by Czech fascism had their origins abroad. Its creation followed similar patterns to those of its counterparts in Europe. However, rather than merely taking over or adopting foreign models, Czech fascists selected some aspects of foreign ideology and merged them with their own thinking. Like their European counterparts, Czech fascists rejected democracy and liberalism, hated socialism and communism, were very concerned with the degeneration of national and Western culture, and engaged in violent clashes with its opposition. Czech fascists also saw themselves as part of something greater and thought beyond the country's borders into Europe. This was reflected in their foreign policies and attempts to cooperate with fascist movements in other countries (with the obvious exception of Nazi Germany, seen as an enemy of the Czech nation). These transnational aspects of Czech fascism require further investigation, however.

Scheinost was also one of the leading proponents of corporativism. First emerging in Italy in 1926, the spread of corporatist ideas in the interwar years was related to the perception of the crisis of the liberal state.

This was a universal phenomenon, and Czechoslovakia was no exception. Catholic intellectuals were among the first to show interest in corporatism, drawing their inspiration from the encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891).³⁸ The fascist project of corporativism had no difficulty finding an audience among Czechoslovak intellectual circles already familiar with the idea.

As much as it was a movement for political change, the NOF was also a cultural project. However, while the history of the NOF as a political movement has been extensively documented, its cultural aspects are yet to be thoroughly investigated. The Czech fascist intellectual Ladislav Švejcar, a teacher by profession and an ardent Catholic by faith, wrote an extensive critique of one of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk's principal works *Česká otázka* (The Czech question; 1895).³⁹ Švejcar claimed that Masaryk misunderstood the core of the Czech question, that his realism was an empty concept, and that receiving a more profound education was insufficient. Interestingly, Švejcar's thoughts contrasted somewhat with the NOF's ideas about pan-Slavism (also emphasised by its leader, Radola Gajda⁴⁰). Švejcar suggested that Czechs must return to "the ideas of the pre-Renaissance era" and to "cultural unity with the West". He also offered an extensive historical discourse explaining that until the Hussite's pre-protestant reformation, the Czech lands and culture were part of the united Catholic West and that Czechs needed to restore this unity as "Latin culture leads, even if someone were to repeat ten times that it is in decline".⁴¹

At the core of Czech fascism's palingenetic project was the idea of an idealised national past, a space which they cherished as an uncontaminated place for a spiritual and cultural purity that had been lost to modernity. The past was a source of inspiration and an instrument of mass mobilisation in the quest for the Fascist Revolution. Apart perhaps from the years of the Czech National Revival (principally the period 1880–1914),⁴² the "golden age" of the Czech nation and culture was the medieval era of the Bohemian Kingdom. Czech fascists glorified figures from Czech history such as Wenceslas I, Duke of Bohemia (r. 921–935), John of Bohemia (r. 1310–1346), and Charles IV (r. 1346–1378).⁴³ The ideologues of the NOF saw the principles of Czech fascism as being deeply embedded in Czech history. They presented themselves as a continuation of a tradition that fused with feudalism, the guild system, a centralised authority, and the cultural spirit of the Bohemian Kingdom.

In the mythic, fictionalised, historical constructions of Czech fascism, there was a need for Czechs to return to the times of Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor. These figures were to serve as a source of national inspiration. According to Švejcar, Czechs—and Slavs in general—should reject all Eastern (including Russian) faith and culture, as well as the ideas of the Reformation, Protestantism, and Marxism. Švejcar saw the Russians' succumbing to communism as evidence of their cultural inferiority. Alongside Poland, which as a Catholic state, was the only true candidate for leading the cultural rebirth of Central Europe, Czechs should promote the once-lost European cultural unity, which required the "integration of all the positive national forces, the dynamic nationalism (fascism)".⁴⁴ Švejcar openly advocated the Czechoslovak nation's orientation towards fascist Italy, which he saw as an exemplary Catholic state. However, according to Švejcar, "Mussolini was lucky because he could return for the ideal of his state to the age of the Renaissance, which is much more acceptable to the modern man. We, however, did not have our political or cultural renaissance ... [so] we must go further back for our example of a strong Czech state; we can do nothing better than look for our inspiration to the age of Charles [IV] ... in both a political and a cultural sense".⁴⁵

Culture was an indispensable feature of fascism's revolutionary project.⁴⁶ In this sense, the NOF was no different. Yet, the "culturalist approach" of the "new consensus" historians was never applied to its case. Czech fascists failed to produce a comprehensive vision of cultural renewal and artistic endeavour and failed to advance any kind of pseudo-scientific biological, anthropological, or eugenic underpinning to the notion of Czech cultural superiority so typical of other fascist movements and regimes. Apart from the vague plans to create a new fascist Slavic state (or alliance) in Central Europe, Czech fascists also failed to produce a comprehensive plan for how the culturally "reborn" Czechoslovakia would be integrated with the new fascist Europe. However, despite being a short-lived and abortive movement crippled with financial difficulties and a lack of intellectually mature members, it did nonetheless create a surprisingly profound discourse on cultural matters. This cultural disposition drew on a variety of concepts of both European and native Czech origin, which are yet to be analysed in detail. It developed within the wider European critique of liberal rationalism and democracy but was mainly built on a foundation of distinctively Czech traditions and concerns. It would be inaccurate, however, to assume that Czech fascism

was nihilistic and anti-culture, or that it operated without a recognisable ideology. Even as a marginal, under-developed fascist movement, it was undoubtedly an embryonic project of a mass nationalist cultural revolution, comparable to other abortive fascist movements in Europe.

CONCLUSIONS

There is much more to be written about Czech fascism, as many of its facets are still completely lacking any kind of scholarly attention. We still know very little about the relationship of Czech fascism to issues such as modernity, gender, violence, religion, culture, art, economics, aesthetics, or technology. Czech(oslovak) fascism is yet to be reviewed in the light of the “new consensus” or analysed through the lens of “Griffinian” optics. The Czech (and Slovak) historiography is only now beginning to “wake up”, to evolve from studies that adhere almost exclusively to empirical approaches to fresher perspectives and more innovative methodological approaches that will explore the place of Czech fascism within the larger fields of Czech and Czechoslovak history and comparative fascism studies. Roger Griffin’s work is only now being discovered—slowly—by scholars in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

It is being increasingly recognised within comparative fascism studies that every permutation of fascism is of equal value in understanding how the ideology of revolutionary nationalism was constructed out of the ingredients of the unique historical cultural and political context in which a particular nation finds itself. To this extent, Czech (and Slovak) fascism is no less important for comparative fascist studies than is Nazism, no matter how wide the gulf between the two is, in regard to their impact on history. Within comparative fascism studies, academics are beginning to employ deeper knowledge of “peripheral” and “abortive” or failed fascisms in order to place our understanding of ‘the fascism of the centre’ (regime fascisms) in a new perspective. Several movements and regimes that arose across Europe between the wars were deeply indebted to Fascism and Nazism but also had original domestic features that cast fresh light on the “core” fascisms in Italy and Germany.

Czech fascism is still one of several missing pieces in the jigsaw of comparative fascist studies. This phenomenon should be studied not just as a local, isolated phenomenon rooted in a national history (even though it mostly was just this) but also as part of a wider European crisis in

which numerous movements sought to create an alternative to the traditional ruling elites. The interpretations of the “new consensus” historians and Griffin’s methodological approach provide a framework in which to place the Czech fascist self-understanding⁴⁷ and allow us to re-consider and re-evaluate previous research and find answers to questions yet to be asked, in order to gain a better understanding of the Czech (and Slovak) national past. Fascism emerged under historical conditions generated by the Great War: the perception of a cultural, political, economic, and spiritual crisis; the recrudescence of strong nationalist feelings; anti-socialism as a reaction to the threat of Bolshevism; and weak and inefficient parliamentary governments. Czech fascism is no exception. Each iteration of fascism proposes a unique radical solution to the multi-causal degeneration and to the combination of threats to nationhood and national vitality that the ideologues of the movement identified. Ultimately, the NOF failed. Similar to other cases of fascism in East-Central Europe, it suffered from amorphous political doctrines, factionalism, and inadequate leadership and was unable to attract mass support. It nonetheless represents a particular manifestation of a broader European phenomenon.

NOTES

1. Kelly, David D. 1995. *The Czech Fascist Movement 1922–1942*. New York: Columbia University Press.
2. Payne, Stanley G. 2001. *A History of Fascism 1914–1945*. Abingdon: Routledge: 309–310.
3. Griffin, Roger. 1991. *The Nature of Fascism*. London and New York: Routledge: 131.
4. Lacko, Miklos. 1973. Ostmitteleuropäischer Faschismus. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 1: 39–51; Sugar, Peter F. (ed.). 1971. *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio; contains articles on fascism in Czechoslovakia by Joseph F. Zacek and Jan Havránek; Vago, Bela (ed.). 1975. *The Shadow of the Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin*. Westmead and Farnborough: Saxon House; Zorach, Jonathan Zorach. 1976. The Enigma of the Gajda Affair in Czechoslovak Politics in 1926. *Slavic Review*, 35: 683–698; Weiss, John. 1977. Fascism in Czechoslovakia, 1919–1939. *East Central Europe*, 4: 35–43.
5. Pejčoch, Ivo. 2011. *Fašismus v českých zemích: Fašistické a nacionálněsocialistické strany a hnutí v Čechách a na Moravě 1922–1945*. Praha: Academia.

6. Pasák, Tomáš. 1999. *Český fašismus 1922–1945 a kolaborace 1939–1945*. Praha: Práh.
7. Gregorovič, Miroslav. 1995. *Kapitoly z českého fašismu*. Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny: 47–48.
8. Krejčo, Otomar L. 2004. Český fašismus (1938–1945). Pokus o bilanci. *Soudobé dějiny*, XI, 1: 21–22.
9. Iordachi, Constantin. 2010. Fascism in Interwar East Central and South-eastern Europe: Toward a New Transnational Research Agenda. *East Central Europe*, 37: 161–213.
10. I refer to the NOF as a “Czech” fascist movement rather than “Czechoslovak” fascism, because even though they claimed to be Czechoslovaks, it was the distinctively Czech version of revolutionary nationalism, while Slovak fascism has its own distinctive manifestations in forms of movements like Rodobrana. See Jelinek, Yeshayahu. 1971. Storm-Troopers in Slovakia: The Rodobrana and the Hlinka Guard. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6, 3: 97–119.
11. For the deconstruction of this myth, see Orzoff, Andrea. 2009. *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Also, although regarded by some Slovak and Czech historians as controversial, Heimann, Mary. 2009. *Czechoslovakia: The State That Failed*. New Have: Yale University Press.
12. Griffin, Roger (ed.). 1998. *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*. London: Arnold Publishers; See also Griffin, Roger. 2002. The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus Within Fascist Studies. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 1: 21–43.
13. See, for example, Griffin, Roger. 2016. Fascism’s Modernist Revolution: A New Paradigm for the Study of Right-Wing Dictatorships. *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 5, 2: 105–129.
14. Griffin, Roger (ed.). 1998. *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*. London: Arnold Publishers: x.
15. See Griffin, Roger. 2002. The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus Within Fascist Studies. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 1: 21–43.
16. Exceptions are Ondrej Cinkajzl’s general overview of the development in fascism studies and Anton Hruboň’s work on the myth of rebirth in the NOF’s ideology. See Cinkajzl, Ondřej. 2010. Ke genezi komparativních fašistických studií a ‘novému konsenzu’. *Securitas imperii*, 17, 2: 106–123; Hruboň, Anton. 2015. Fašistický mýtus znovuzrodenia v kontexte ideológie Národnej obce fašistickej a Rodobrany. *Český časopis historický*, 113, 2: 454–487. It is also worth mentioning the Czech translation of Roger Griffin’s *Modernism and Fascism*: Griffin, Roger. 2015. *Modernismus a fašismus*. Praha: Karolinum.

17. Nakonečný, Milan. 1999. K psychologii a perspektívám českého fašismu. *Český fašismus 1922–1945 a kolaborace 1939–1945*. Edited by Tomáš Pasák. Praha: Práh: 397.
18. See Pavel Baloun's review of his book. Baloun, Pavel. 2010. Čeští fašisté jako "naivní národovci": Netradiční pohled na fenomén českého fašismu. *Soudobé dějiny*, 1–2: 194–204; and Milan Nakonečný's response, Nakonečný, Milan. 2010. Odpověď na kritiku mé knihy o českém fašismu. *Soudobé dějiny*, 1–2: 189–193.
19. Kotlán, Pavel. 2001. *Fašismus a jeho česká podoba: Národní obec fašistická 1926–1933 a fašismus současný*. Přerov: Šárka.
20. Kotlán, Pavel. 2009. *Gajdova (ne)věrná Morava*. Brno: Institut vzdělávání Sokrates.
21. Kotlán, Pavel. 2009. *Gajdova (ne)věrná Morava*. Brno: Institut vzdělávání Sokrates, 18.
22. Mareš, Miroslav. 2013. Separatist currents in Moravian fascism and National Socialism. *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, 2, 1: 41–67.
23. Hruboň, Anton. 2015. Fašistický mýtus znovuzrodenia v kontexte ideológie Národnej obce fašistickej a Rodobrany. *Český časopis historický*, 113, 2: 454–487.
24. Szabó, Miloslav. 2019. *Klerofašisti: Slovenskí kňazi a pokúšenie radikálnej politiky (1935–1945)*. Bratislava: Slovart.
25. Pasák, Tomáš. 1999. *Český fašismus 1922–1945 a kolaborace 1939–1945*. Praha: Práh: 83.
26. Pasák, Tomáš. 1965. K problematice NOF v letech hospodářské krize. *Sborník historický* 13: 93–132.
27. From the very beginning, the NOF was strongly anti-Semitic, blaming Jews from all the bad that happened to the Czech nation. According to NOF speakers, Jews were responsible for unleashing the First World War, the civil war in Spain, and other conflicts. Jew were also yearning to achieve world domination. See, for example, National Archives of the Czech Republic (NAČR), Ministry of Interior, Presidium (PMV) 225–750, "Policejní zprávy o veřejných schůzích NOF".
28. Zástěra, Zdeněk. 1926. *Co fašism je a co chce*. Praha: Národní Obec fašistická. Quoted from NAČR, PMV 225/373/5.
29. Základní idee fašistického vládního programu. 1926. NAČR, PMV 225/373/7 document No. 38.
30. Šnepp, František. 1927. Slovanský fašism. *Říšská stráž* 1, 5 April 1927; see also Lebloch, Otakar. 1927. *Fašistický stat.* Brno: Otakar Lebloch: 52–58, and many other writings.
31. It is not clear, however, if these were NOF leaflets. They were written in Cyrillic and signed "Fascists". See *Agitace fašistů v SRS*, NAČR PMV 225/373/6, document 29.

32. Balthasar, Vladmimir. 1928. Kultura jde po cestách národního sebevědomí. *Stěžeň*, 1, Leden, 9.
33. Lebloch, Otakar. 1927. *Fašistický stat*. Brno: Otakar Lebloch: 5.
34. Lebloch, Otakar. 1927. *Fašistický stat*. Brno: Otakar Lebloch: 40.
35. Scheinost was the most important member of a group of Catholic intellectuals who provided the NOF with the basis of its fascist ideology which remained for the duration of its existence, even though Scheinost himself—disappointed that he could not push through his vision of a movement for spiritual and moral rebirth based on the Catholic faith—left the movement after two years or so. The NOF was not a Catholic fascist movement and Scheinost was unable to implement his ideas as a significant number of the movement's leaders, including Gajda, were Christian, but not Catholics.
36. Scheinost, Jan. 1928. Slova na cestu. *Stěžeň*, 1, 1.
37. Bednářiková, Eliška. 2008. Jan Scheinost—Katolík, fašista. *Teorie a praxe politického katolicismu 1870–2007*. Edited by Pavel Marek. Brno: CDK: 202–203.
38. Šmíd, Marek. 2008. Stavovský stát očima českých katolických intelektuálů v letech 1918–1938. *Teorie a praxe politického katolicismu 1870–2007*. Edited by Pavel Marek. Brno: CDK: 184–193. For more on the influence of fascism on Czech Catholic intellectuals, see, for example, Putna, Martin. 2010. *Česká katolická literatura 1918–1945*. Praha: Torst; Šmíd, Marek. 2012. Osobnost Benita Mussoliniho a obraz italského fašismu v českém katolickém prostředí v kontextu první republiky. *Studia theologica*, 14, 4: 127–144; Med, Jaroslav. 2010. *Literární život ve stínu Mnichova (1938–1939)*. Praha: Academia.
39. Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue. 1895. *Česká otázka: snahy a tužby národního obrození*. Praha: Čas.
40. See, for example, Gajda, Radola. 1931. *Ideologie československého fašismu: Cyklus přednášek O ideologii českoslov: politických stran*. Praha: Tiskový odbor Ústředního svazu československého studentstva: 16.
41. Švejcar, Ladislav. 1928. Masarykova Česká otázka – dokončení. *Stěžeň*, 3 (April 21): 82–83.
42. The Czech National Revival was a cultural movement which took place in the Czech lands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The purpose of the movement was to revive the Czech language, Czech culture, and Czech national identity.
43. See, for example, Švejcar, Ladislav. 1928. Legenda o pohaněném králi. *Stěžeň*, 4 (May 27): 99–105; Štorm, Bretislav. 1928. Karel Čtvrtý. *Stěžeň*, 9–10 (December 31): 315–316; Štorm, Břetislav. 1929. Svatému Václavu, patronu rytířů. *Stěžeň*, II, 12 (September 27): 189–190.
44. Švejcar, Ladislav. 1928. Masarykova Česká otázka – dokončení. *Stěžeň*, 3 (April 21): 83.

45. Švejcar, Ladislav. 1928. Od myšlenky k dílu. *Říšská stráž*, 173 (September 19): 2.
46. Griffin, Roger. 2002. The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus Within Fascist Studies. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 1, 21–43; Gentile, Emilio. 1996. *Sacralisation of Politics in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Linehan, Thomas P. and Gottlieb, Julie V. 2004. *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain*. London: I.B. Tauris; Affron, Mark and Antliff, Mark (eds.). 1997. *Fascist Visions: Art and Ideology in France and Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; and many others.
47. Mosse, George L. 1999. *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*. New York: Howard Fertig: x.

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CHAPTER 9

Era Fascista: Italian Fascism's New Beginning and Its Roman Past Future

Fernando Esposito

THE FASCIST VISION OF THE FUTURE

When *Modernism and Fascism* was published in 2007, I had found the book that I had anxiously been hoping for. Griffin's publication was "good to think with", not least because it overcame the tedious and unhelpful dichotomies that still pervaded the bulk of the contributions to the discussion regarding fascism's relationship to modernity. With hindsight, it is easy to claim that towards the end of the first decade of the new century modernisation theory had been declared deceased for quite some time and that its spatialised twin, globalisation theory, had taken over the throne quite some time ago, that is in the course of the 1990s. Yet, that is not how discursive shifts occur or how theoretical perspectives are superseded. In fact, modernisation theory was not only still alive and kicking back then but its temporal underpinning and the categories of temporal differentiation that defined historical, non-synchronous thinking are still with us today. Be that as it may, the Roger Griffin I met, first by way of reading and then in person, seemed to combine the clarity of the Apollonian with the passion of the Dionysian, an engaged academic

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with urgent questions and novel answers. He was surely not the austere Italian or German professor I was accustomed to. Who else could have chosen *Party Time. The Temporal Revolution of the Third Reich* as a title for an article on fascist temporality?¹ Long before historians started to proclaim a “temporal turn” on the horizon, Roger Griffin was examining “the fascist project for managing the future”, as well as their “quest to regenerate time”, and thus “conceptualizing fascist temporalities” against the backdrop of Reinhart Koselleck’s theory of historical times.²

Starting from Griffin’s work on fascist temporalities and their link to modernity, this essay gives an overview of concepts that were of fundamental relevance to the Fascist but also more broadly generic fascist vision of the future. To begin with, this contribution takes a look at the Fascist Revolution as well as at its institutionalisation as *era fascista*, primarily referring to the new calendar adopted by the Fascists in 1926/1927 to express their claim to have inaugurated a “new age”. It also sheds a light on the concept of the New Man, which was closely intertwined with the vision of a new era. In the second section, this essay takes a brief look at the concept of *bonifica* and at the myth of universal Rome, a buried past-future, which had to be ‘excavated’ and realised anew.³ With their “radical thinking of order” and their practices of social engineering, the Fascists triggered an ultimately uncontrollable dynamic.⁴ Yet the Fascists compensated the dynamism of their movement, the permanent mobilisation and perpetual *Aufbruch*—‘setting out to an open sea’—that they attempted to trigger in Italian society with a supposedly eternal myth. This paradoxical fascist temporality, or rather this oscillation between *Aufbruch*, destruction of the past, and the rebirth or revival of an eternal order constitutes the centre of attention of this essay.⁵

AUFBRUCH INTO A NEW ERA: REVOLUTION, ERA FASCISTA AND NEW MAN

Societies are “pluralitemporal” and thus boast a plurality of envisioned futures, regardless of the wishes and demands of a totalitarian regime.⁶ Consequently, Fascist Italy too was characterised by the parallel existence of a wide variety of social times, opposing “horizons of expectation”, and contradictory visions of history. It is thus an invalid reduction of complexity to speak of *the* vision of the future in Fascist Italy, as such a statement not only obfuscates this plurality of social times but also conceals the manifold ways in which individuals ‘time’ themselves.⁷

Furthermore, it also obscures the fact that Fascists held diverse visions of the future and that one and the same Fascist's vision of the future may have evolved in the course of the *ventennio*. Thus, we must assume that there was both a synchronous and diachronic plurality of Fascist futures, utopian visions, and political projects: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's futurism and his antihistoricist vision of a pastless future must be juxtaposed to the actualist philosopher Giovanni Gentile's vision or that of Roberto Farinacci, the intransigent *Ras* of Cremona and temporary general secretary of the Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*, PNF). The synchronous futures of these men were also likely to mutate, depending on the current "stage" of Fascism. The Fascists' visions of the future differed according to the current priorities of the movement—that is whether it was trying to obtain popular support or if the party was aiming to gain or to consolidate political power; whether Fascism was carrying out a war of annihilation in a distant colony and (re)radicalising itself or it was occupied by its northern Axis ally.⁸ Nonetheless, there are some recurring elements that allow us to make out family resemblances between various fascists at different times, the concept of 'revolution' or the idea of a radical break with the past being among the most important.

To begin with, the future the Fascists envisioned was a continuation of the "dynamic of destruction" which resulted from the First World War.⁹ The self-proclaimed *trincerocrazia*, or aristocracy of the trenches, sought to violently rid Italy of all that was deemed feeble, unfavourable, and old. A vital, youthful race of new men were to replace the ailing and stale liberal bourgeoisie, the clericalists, the monarchical conservatives, and the internationalist left. Thus, it is no wonder that Futurists were among the 'Fascists of the first hour' (*fascisti della prima ora*), which founded the *Fasci di Combattimento* at the Milanese piazza San Sepolcro on 23 March 1919. The Futurists were the most prominent representatives and audacious prophets of the revolutionary urge to destroy the past that was widespread amongst Fascists.¹⁰ The futuristic hate of *passatismo*, that is of the antiquarian and historicist spirit of the nineteenth century, was the intellectual variant of the desire for destruction and violence, with which numerous disillusioned angry young men returned from the war, struggling to uphold the sense of their sacrifices on the nation's altar. They intended

to free this nation from its fetid cancer of professors, archaeologists, tour guides, and antiquarians. [...] We intend to liberate it from the countless museums that have covered it like so many cemeteries. [...] But we intend to know nothing of it, nothing of the past – we strong and youthful Futurists! And so, let the glad arsonists with charred fingers come! Here they are!¹¹

Ten years later, these arsonists were among the founders of a movement, one of whose first actions was to assault and burn down the headquarters of the socialist newspaper *Avanti!* on 15 April 1919. Yet their desire to abolish a certain past, which they deemed disgraceful, did not hinder the Fascists from collaborating with the conservative elites, with the representatives of the very same old Italy they sought to destroy. For, apart from the intransigent local bosses of the provincial *squadre*, the Fascists were flexible pragmatists. Especially Mussolini had no problem with temporary pacts with enemies or with abandoning his ‘principles’. As he proclaimed on 20 September 1922 in Udine, “our program is simple: we wish to rule Italy”.¹² This quote is commonly cited to substantiate the claim that Fascism did not possess a proper ideology. However, the rest of Mussolini’s speech bears witness to the fact that the Fascists were not simply interested in power for the sake of it, even if they were surely allured by it. Their struggle for power was driven by their radicalised nationalism, by their aim of a *più grande Italia*, that is of making Italy great again.¹³ The Fascist future was founded on the vision of the nation, for which many of them had only just risked their lives and which was then seen as being jeopardised by the liberal government, the socialists, and Italy’s former international Allies. To the Fascists, post-war Italy was a humiliating shadow of itself and had to be supplanted by the imagined Italy that had become their “sacred *realissimum*” during the deadly wartime battles in the Alps or on the Isonzo.¹⁴ It was there that their radical nationalist vision of a disciplined Italian nation imbued with a profound sense of community and finally obtaining its due rank among the great and powerful nations was born. As such this nationalist dream was not particularly ‘revolutionary’. Yet in combination with the desire to violently rid Italy of the old, that is all perceived obstacles to the nation’s rebirth, it gained a revolutionary dynamic that was underestimated by Fascism’s adversaries as well as its contemporary and later interpreters. Brutal thugs in the service of the landowning elites of the Po

valley—surely, this was not a textbook revolution, not in the least because ‘revolution’ was a concept supposedly reserved for the left.

Yet it is not only through the attempt to destroy a despised present and declare it a banished ‘past’ that Fascism’s claim to revolution manifests itself, but also in their evocation of the “*era fascista*” and in the latter’s institutionalisation as the fascist calendar. Like the French Revolutionary calendar more than a century earlier, the Fascist calendar objectified the break with the decadent past and the beginning of a glorious new era: the future of the greater Italy, so the calendar and the new counting of the years suggested, had already begun. In fact, it seems to have been on 19 October 1923, in a letter to the journalist and jurist Titta Madia, that Mussolini complemented the conventional *Anno Domini* with the year of the Fascist era for the first time.¹⁵ For Mussolini, the new era had begun with the March on Rome, which the Fascists had staged a year earlier. Taking into consideration that King Vittorio Emanuele III offered Mussolini the position of prime minister on 29 October and that the *squadre* were subsequently allowed to enter the city, the March on Rome was actually a non-event. Yet it was a non-event that in subsequent years took on an aspect of major importance that paralleled if not surpassed the storming of the Bastille—one need only think of the 1932 exhibition *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista* that was organised to commemorate, celebrate, and canonise the March as a seismic turning point in Italian and indeed global history.

In December 1925, the prefect of Reggio Emilia, a certain Bernardo Borelli, suggested to the Ministry of the Interior that as “a tribute to the integral fascistisation of national life” all public authorities should indicate the fascist year in Roman numbers “as the Duce does” in all official correspondence.¹⁶ As Emilio Gentile has shown, it was then the Minister of Education, Pietro Fedele, who expressed his wish to mention the date of the Fascist Revolution in the official correspondence so that it always be present in the spirit of the youth.¹⁷ Following from this example of a “working towards the Duce” mentality, the *era fascista* began with a circular from Mussolini to all ministers dated—probably no coincidence—25 December 1926.¹⁸ Following the Duce’s Christmas decree the Fascist and the Gregorian calendar were synchronous: the *era fascista* began on 28 October 1922 and the first year of the era ended on December 31st. Yet, following a discussion between Mussolini and the king in January, things got more complicated, as a memorandum from 10 January 1927 shows. Now the Fascist year was to last from 28th October till 27th

October of the following year. For one, by way of this postponement the Fascist calendar would more closely resemble the French Revolutionary calendar. Yet this uncoupling of the turn of the Fascist and Christian year also reflected the fact that, considering the historical importance of the Fascist Revolution, it seemed hardly appropriate for the first Fascist year to have only lasted two months.¹⁹ Confusions were to abound, not least because the beginning of the Fascist New Year was subsequently to be shifted from the 28th of October to the 29th.

The Fascist calendar not only symbolised the new beginning the Fascists had inaugurated but it was also a weapon in the battle for hegemony in catholic Italy—and thus also an instrument to do away with an ostensibly harmful past. The Fascist calendar juxtaposed a wide variety of Fascist holidays, which were celebrated in accordance with Fascist liturgy, to the manifold religious holidays and celebrations of local saints.²⁰ In addition to 28 October the Fascists declared 4 November, the day of the victory over the Habsburg empire, a national holiday.²¹ Further holidays included 23 March, the day of the founding of the *Fasci di Combattimento*; 24 May, the day of the declaration of war in 1915; and 21 April, the so-called *Natale di Roma* or birthday of Rome. The latter had already been declared the *giornata del lavoro* and replaced 1 May in 1923.²² Whereas the success of the Fascist calendar was modest, the calendar and the Fascist holidays contributed to the fascistisation of the everyday life of the Italians. Their time, a “scarce social resource”, was allocated to the Fascist organisations, be it the party itself or its sub-organisations like the Organisation of After-Work (*Opera Nazionale del Dopolavoro*) or the Fascist youth movement (*Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*).²³

The primary aim of this blatant seizure of time was the gradual transformation of the Italian individual into a New (Fascist) Man. With this in mind the futurist, *ardito*, Fiume veteran, and ‘Fascist of the first hour’ Mario Carli wrote in his ‘Codex of Fascist Life’ (Codex della vita fascista) which was published in 1927, that “there is a whole world of convolutions of the brain that need renovation. We have to redo the Italians’ brains. Those of the old, if possible. Those of the young, of course/by force [*per forza*]”. One need only to see Mussolini “to drink fascist substance, to be enlightened by fascist light, to understand how the new Italian of the fascist era must be, new from head to toe, inside and outside, in his sensitivity and his spirit”.²⁴ At times, when seeing someone sporting a party badge, Carli continued, it was as if

we stand before a totally new structure of man, in whom the lifeblood of the last decade has erased all residues of the mediocre, passive, sluggish, cozy and provincial past. [...] The past! A plague from which the Italians seemingly cannot be liberated. Not the glorious past, not the great past of the conquerors, of the seafarers, the artists, the formidable politicians that gave Italy a millenarian primacy but the recent mediocre past of the minuscule Italy of the 19th century.²⁵

An “anthropological revolution” was necessary to create the New Italian of the Fascist future²⁶: a revolution that would break with the shameful past only to reconnect with the glorious past, a revolution that would eradicate all the weakly characteristics from Italians’ minds and bodies. Only after this violent purge would the new martial Italian, the “Roman of modernity” rise, as part of a reborn virile, aggressive, dynamic, and imperial race. The central role of regenerative violence was evident, as violence was needed to destroy everything that was old, feeble, and standing in the way, thus unearthing the valuable ‘bloodline’ that Fascists strove to reclaim and reconnect with.

BONIFICA AND PALINGENESIS: THE REBIRTH OF ETERNAL ROME

As Roger Griffin has repeatedly shown, the palingenetic myth of a reborn, stronger, greater, imperial Italy stood at the core of Fascism’s ideology and therefore also of its vision of the future. Alongside the creation of a New Man, the active pursuit of *bonifica* (literally, reclamation or amelioration) across all fields of individual and collective life was an integral aspect of Italy’s regenerative horizon. As Ruth Ben-Ghiat has argued, the far-reaching projects of *bonifica agricola* (agrarian), *umana* (human) as well as the *bonifica della cultura* (culture) were pivotal in Fascist modernity, since, “together with the anti-Jewish laws”, they comprised “different facets and phases of a comprehensive project to combat degeneration and radically renew Italian society by ‘pulling up the bad weeds and cleaning up the soil’”.²⁷ In combination with the semantics of a ‘new beginning’, the concept of *bonifica* with its organic connotations posed an alternative vision of change, which was opposed to the liberal and Marxist concepts of progress. In a speech to the people of Reggio Emilia at the end of October 1926, Mussolini first praised the work of “redeeming the land

from the swamps”, which he had seen earlier on that day. He then carried on:

It is necessary for us in this era and for this generation to create, as it is up to us to make the physical and spiritual face of the fatherland unrecognisable within ten years. In ten years, my comrades, Italy will be unrecognisable! We will have transformed her, we will have made her a different Italy, from the mountains that we will have recovered with the necessary greenery to the fields that we will have completely reclaimed [bonificato], to the railroads that we will have increased, and the ports that we will have equipped, as Italy has to find its seafaring spirit again. [...] We will create the new Italian, an Italian that will not resemble yesterday's. It is the generations that have fought the war and thus are intimately fascist. Then will come the generations that we are educating today and we are creating in our image and likeness.²⁸

The *bonifica umana* testifies to the biopolitical ambitions of the Fascist gardening state as well as to the ‘creative’ and destructive drive that underlay the “dictatorship of mobilisation”.²⁹ Ultimately, permanent mobilisation of the populace was to lead to a permanent and static order, just as revolutionary dynamism was to lead to an immobile, eternal time.

The *bonifica* of the Pontine Marshes was part and parcel of this attempt at permanent mobilisation and of pursuit of the New Man. The vast and costly project of reclamation of the Pontine marshland to the south of Rome between 1927 and 1939 was a trademark high-modernist social engineering project that was implemented by the National Institute for War Veterans (*Opera Nazionale Combattenti*).³⁰ As one of the major public projects of the Fascist regime, it was invested with multiple functions. The battle against nature was a “battle for grain”—an attempt to increase Italy’s agricultural output within the framework of the regime’s programme for autarchy—as well as an antimalarial campaign.³¹ The settlement of the newly reclaimed land also served to compensate for Italy’s increasing urbanisation and forced industrialisation. It was intended to bolster demographic growth, as the Fascists imagined that a fertile rural population of *piccoli proprietari* (small landowners) would contribute to Mussolini’s fanciful idea of “eight million bayonets” for the Italian army. Furthermore, this internal colonisation project was also a test run for the greater Mediterranean and African empire (*impero*) that the Fascists were building following the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. In the newsreel of

the official state new agency Luce celebrating Mussolini's inauguration of one of the new centres of the Agro Pontino in December 1932, the city of Littoria, the commentator states:

Littoria, this true and great modern epic deed of life and work, will testify for centuries to the will to realise and the magnificent effort characteristic of Mussolini's new Italy. The *bonifica*, which in such short time has tamed hostile nature, cancelled twenty-five centuries of misery, restored and populated a region once dominated by death, is a miracle. In fact, the Opera Nazionale Combattenti received this land of swamp and deadly disease on 6 November 1931, on 7 November the first echelon of 1,300 workers arrived, on 31 January 1932 the foundations of the first colonial house were laid, on 5 April the Duce initiated the plowing of the land by an enormous number of machines, on 30 June 1932 the first stone of the city of Littoria was laid; to this day 10,500 hectares of soil have been reclaimed [*bonificati*], 515 buildings built, 370 km of streets, 410 km of canals, [and] 2,000 km of ditches opened; circa 17,000 inhabitants give life to the new city, a synthesis and celebration of boldness, will and tenacity; today we intone the powerful hymn of life that consecrates this victorious labor to the future.³²

The *bonifica* of the Agro Pontino was always much more than just a propaganda stunt to represent the regime's dynamism, its visionary planning, and an efficiency that it strove for but seldom achieved. In the Pontine Marshes, the Fascist state did not only test its capacity as a "developmental dictatorship" but it also attempted to realise the future in the present.³³ Thus, while conquering nature and modernising a wilderness that it understood as a shameful 'internal Africa', the regime was above all struggling to shape and recreate the Italian people. It was not only the wasteland that had to be reclaimed; the Italian society of the Liberal era was itself like a swamp that had to be drained. The decadent, individualistic society was to be supplanted by a hierarchically ordered community serving the nation, a *Volksgemeinschaft* rooted both in 'healthy' rural traditions and in the spirit of *romanità*. Thus, like external colonisation, internal colonisation was an attempt at bringing forth the new disciplined warrior-like Italian race. Just as the newly re-planned Eritrean city of Asmara, with its futuristic architecture—one need only think of the iconic Tagliero gas station—and racist segregation, was a showcase for the Fascist future, the new cities and hamlets that the Fascists erected in the erstwhile malaria-stricken marshes presented a first draft of the orderly,

martial, industrious, ultra-nationalist Fascist society that was supposed to endure and excel for centuries.

The temporal symbolism behind the reclamation of the land was obvious: the once fertile soil had returned to wilderness just as the erstwhile birthplace of civilisation—Roman Italy—had fallen into decline. It was thus up to the Fascists to turn degeneration into regeneration. Therefore, the *bonifica* of the Pontine Marshes also refers to a further dimension of Fascist ‘New Time’, that is the Fascist *futures past*. For, while the Agro Pontino was ‘new land’ (*terra nuova*), it was at the same time *reclaimed*, ancient Roman or rather in this case even the ancient Italic land of the Volsci.³⁴ It thus provides an insight into Fascism’s paradoxical temporality. The cancellation of “twenty-five centuries of misery”, mentioned by the narrator in Luce’s newsreel, that signified the revolutionary abolition of the despised periods of the past coincided with a movement “back to the future” of *romanità* as Roger Griffin has shown, and which Arthur Moeller van den Bruck aptly named a “reconnection forwards” (*Wiederanknüpfung nach Vorwärts*).³⁵ What applied to the Pontine Marshes was true both for the city of Rome itself and for the Italian population. Just as the rubble of centuries had to be cleared, to uncover the underlying eternal Rome, the adverse past had to be forced out of the contemporary Italian so that the Roman could come through and be cultivated.

The myth of Rome defined the Fascist style and aesthetics. It underlay the vision of the New Man and of the bellicose and orderly society, shaped the face of the Italian cities, informed the imperial ambitions that the regime undertook to realise in Libya, Ethiopia, and southeastern Europe, and pervaded the entire idea of a new Fascist civilisation (*civiltà fascista*). Whereas the myth of Rome was often dismissed as theatrical trumpery and seen as evidence of the regime’s reactionary drive and nostalgia, Joshua Arthurs has convincingly shown that *romanità* was “a revolutionary project for modernity, a coherent language with which to articulate aspirations for the contemporary world”.³⁶ The myth of Rome was the Fascist answer to the fundamental temporal dilemma of modernity, that is the “constant revolutionising”, the sweeping away of “all fixed, fast-frozen relations, [...] ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions”, and the rapid antiquation of “all new-formed ones”.³⁷ The cult of *romanità* rooted Fascism’s own revolution. As it was executed in the spirit of Rome, it was a revolution to end all “constant revolutionising” and signalled the beginning of an eternal era of irrevocable values

and truths of the nation. On 21 April 1922, on the *Natale di Roma*, Mussolini proclaimed:

Celebrating Rome's birthday means celebrating our type of civilisation; it means praising our history and our race; it means standing firmly on the past to better recast ourselves towards the future. Rome and Italy are in fact two inseparable terms. In the gray and sad epochs of our history, Rome is the beacon of the seafarers and of those who wait. [...] Certainly the Rome that we honour is not solely the Rome of the monuments and ruins [...] The Rome that we honour, but most of all the Rome that we admire and prepare, is another one: It is not a Rome of illustrious stones but of living spirits; it is not a nostalgic contemplation of the past but a rough preparation of the future. Rome is our point of departure; it is our symbol or, if you will, our myth.³⁸

Standing "firmly on the past" and having a secure "point of departure" enabled the Fascists to "better cast" Italians "towards the future". This future was born out of the violence of the First World War, as the fascists struggled to make sense of the senseless, to quote Theodor Lessing, and transformed the bloodied ground of the war into the seedbed of rebirth, death into *giovinanza*—a celebration of youth.³⁹ The myth of Rome grounded the Fascist new beginning on a supposedly stable foundation and the *era fascista* became a return home under a "sacred canopy".⁴⁰ *Romanità* was thus the nucleus of Fascism's "past future" or *vergangene Zukunft*, to adapt Reinhart Koselleck's term. The eternal and universal Rome was a future that was rooted in a past, which, as Peter Osborne has shown, had to be realised "*for the first time*".⁴¹ Before returning to this temporal paradox, a contemporary voice might help to elucidate it. On 21 April 1923, Giuseppe Bastianini, secretary of the Fasci Abroad (*Fasci italiana all'estero*), stated:

We Fascists do not cultivate a cult of History that is considered as a collection of distant facts. Instead, we believe in the virtues of the makers of history. We sometimes pause to remember episodes that are products of particular individual and collective states of mind [and] reveal virtues that it is a necessity to exalt and reawaken. It is in this sense that Rome has become for us not a glory of the past but a certainty of the future, not a memory that has to be handed down but an end which has to be reached, a task that has to be fulfilled, a necessity that has to be satisfied, a faith that has to be served.⁴²

In Nietzsche's sense, the Fascists used Rome in the service of 'life': "if the man who wants to do something great has need of the past at all, he appropriates it as means of monumental history".⁴³ Yet, their use of the 'past' cannot only be described as monumental history but also as a "conservative revolution". As Peter Osborne elaborated in 1995 and Roger Griffin showed in *Modernism and Fascism*, the Fascist "conservative revolution" was

modernist in the full temporal sense of affirming the temporality of the new. Its image of the future may derive from the mythology of some lost origin or suppressed national essence, but its temporal dynamic is rigorously futural. [...] Conservative revolution [...] understands that what it would 'conserve' is already lost (if indeed it ever existed, which is doubtful), and hence must be created anew. It recognizes that under such circumstances the chance presents itself fully to realize this 'past' for the first time.⁴⁴

It is this sort of paradox which continues to irritate the adherents of modernist historicist temporality and which reminds us of the need not only to historicise the latter but also to develop a more complex understanding of (historical) temporality. Only when we have developed a theory of historical times that is better placed to cope with the mixing-up of times as well as with the large number of supposed exceptions will we be able to grasp the *revenants* that continue to haunt us.⁴⁵ By analysing the fascist "sense of a beginning", Roger Griffin's work has not only greatly expanded the formerly narrow understanding of modernity, but also made us more aware of the risks that the splitting-off of fascism and the denial of its "coevalness" entail.⁴⁶ Only when we come to terms with fascism's paradoxical temporality will we be able to better understand both our own transformed temporality and the ongoing fascination that fascist "retrotopias" exert on a—regrettably once again growing—segment of the populace and to take action against such longings.⁴⁷

NOTES

1. Cf. Griffin, Roger. 1999. Party Time: The Temporal Revolution of the Third Reich. *History Today* 49: 43–49.
2. See: Griffin, Roger. 2008. Modernity Under the New Order: The Fascist Project for Managing the Future. In *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, an article which goes back to a series of papers which appeared in 1994 as well as: Griffin, Roger. 2008. 'I Am No Longer Human. I Am a Titan. A God!': The Fascist Quest to Regenerate Time. In *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, ed. Matthew Feldman. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, an article which goes back to 1997/1998. See also: Roger Griffin. 2015. Fixing Solutions: Fascist Temporalities as Remedies for Liquid Modernity. *Journal of Modern European History* 13: 5–23, 5.
3. Cf. Arthurs, Joshua. 2012. *Excavating Modernity: The Roman Past in Fascist Italy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
4. On "radical thinking of order", see: Raphael, Lutz. 2001. Radikales Ordnungsdenken und die Organisation totalitärer Herrschaft. *Weltanschauungseliten und Humanwissenschaftler im NS-Regime. Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27: 5–40.
5. On this, see: Esposito, Fernando, and Reichardt, Sven. 2015. Revolution and Eternity: Introductory Remarks on Fascist Temporalities. *Journal of Modern European History* 13: 24–43. On Aufbruch see: Griffin, Roger. 2007. *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning Under Mussolini and Hitler*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
6. On pluritemporality, see: Landwehr, Achim. 2014. *Geburt der Gegenwart. Eine Geschichte der Zeit im 17. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 38.
7. On the verbal form "to time" cf. Elias, Norbert. 1992. *Time: An Essay*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 42 et seq.
8. Cf. Paxton, Robert. 2004. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. London: Penguin Books.
9. Cf. Kramer, Alan. 2007. *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
10. Cf. Gentile, Emilio. 2009. "La nostra sfida alle stelle". *Futuristi in Politica*. Rome-Bari: Editori Laterza.
11. Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. 2009 [orig. 1909]. The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism. In *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, 49–53. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 52.
12. Mussolini, Benito. 1963 [orig. 1922]. L'Azione e la dottrina fascista dinnanzi alle necessità storiche della nazione. In. *Opera Omnia. Vol. XVIII*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Dulio Susmel, 411–432. Florence: La Fenice, 416.

13. Cf. Gentile, Emilio. 2009. *La Grande Italia. The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
14. Berger, Peter L. 1990. *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books, 32.
15. Mussolini, Benito. 1963². Letter to Titta Madia of 19 October, 1923. In *Opera Omnia. Vol. XX*, ed. Edoardo Susmel and Duilio Susmel, 335–336. Florence: La Fenice.
16. Archivio Centrale dello Stato (in the following ACS) ACS.PS.1925, b. 126, lettera del Prefetto Borelli al Ministero dell'Interno, 18 December 1925 sulla indicazione della data anche con l'anno dell'Era Fascista.
17. On this and the following cf. Gentile, Emilio. 1996. *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 50–52.
18. ACS, PCM, 1942, fasc. Nr. 49269, sottofascicolo 2, circolare di S.E. il Capo del Governo, 25 December 1926, n. 4198/3.17 sulla indicazione dell'anno fascista negli atti ufficiali delle Amministrazioni statali, ed annuari, calendari, ecc. Cf. Kershaw, Ian. 1993. 'Working Towards the Führer.' *Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship. Contemporary European History* 2: 103–118.
19. ACS, PCM, 1942, fasc. Nr. 49269, sottofascicolo 2, appunto per il capo del governo 10 January 1927.
20. Cf. Gentile. *Sacralization of Politics*, 80–101.
21. Cf. Law 1726 of 12.27.1930. 28 October was already declared a national holiday with law 1779 from 21 October 1926. Senato del Regno and Camera dei Deputati (ed.). 1934. *La legislazione fascista, 1929–1934 (VII–XII). Vol. 1*. Rom: Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati, 513.
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From the Fringes to the State: The Transformation of the Falange into a State Party

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STUDYING THE SPANISH FALANGE IN ITS OWN CONTEXT

Having chosen the Falange, and more precisely, the General Secretariat of the Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS (FET), as the topic of my dissertation, I spent countless hours trying to decide if Francoism was a fascist regime, immersing myself in one of the key debates coursing through Spanish historiography at the time. Of course, this inevitably led to another conundrum, what was indeed fascism? It was then that I came across two historians that would influence me greatly, Robert Paxton and Roger Griffin. While I heartedly welcomed Paxton's emphasis on the political practice of fascism, and still consider his theory of the five stages methodologically useful, it was Griffin's definition of fascism as "palingenetic ultranationalism" that truly helped me understand how and why particular aspects of fascism became so attractive to followers and the broader public in the interwar period. It did not only help me articulate and fully comprehend the fascist nature of the Falange Española,

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but eventually distinguish between the functional fascist mimicry of some of Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorial measures, and the ideologically driven borrowing practised by the Falange. During the 1930s–early 1940s, the movement could at the same time, and in an obvious exercise of hypocrisy, copy policies and even institutions from Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany and proclaim its total independence from foreign ideas. In this vein, many Falangists tried to marry the tried and tested practice of fascism with the key principles that, in their mind, defined the essence of Spain, building upon the nostalgia of a harmonic, unified and imperial medieval society that had, they believed, characterised the reign of the Catholic Kings. The problem, however, with Griffin's definition was that, even when it was expanded to cover other movements beyond Italian Fascism and National Socialism through the concept of para-fascism, it still gravitated around two ideal models that all others aimed to imitate. This inevitably led to sometimes circular debates around the nature of these para-fascist movements, which all too often obscured our understanding of them, as the centrality of Nazi-Fascism as an ideal model implied a quasi-teleological nature to any political approach to fascism that treated every para-fascist case study mainly as a failure. Moreover, making Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy the benchmarks of fascism seemed to imply that at some point these regimes had become a finished product ready for export. It was the work of Ismael Saz that helped me overcome some of these problems. Saz introduced the concept of fascistisation into the debate, not as a teleological or interrupted process, but as one that could be stopped, adjusted, or even reversed, which explained how the radical right could adopt key elements of fascism, yet not become fascist.¹ In so doing, he highlighted the lability of the border between fascists and non-fascists.

It was the combination of these three contributions that shaped my research on the Falange and Francoism. Together they allowed me to focus more on what the Falange was and achieved instead of what it could have been. In this sense, I fully subscribe to a recent trend in fascist studies that considers the study of hybrid or fascisticised political movements in their own context; avoiding treating them as mere copies of the two allegedly perfect models of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.² While it is evident that Nazi-Fascism exerted a critical influence over the European political spectrum of the 1930s, it is essential to acknowledge that it did not always entail the perfect reproduction of those models. And it

is in this spirit that I have tackled the study of the transformation of the Falange into a state party, which I will explain over the following pages.

The early years of the Francoist regime saw the rise to power of the Falange Española. This fascist party, a minority force in the times of the Second Republic, grew exponentially after the outbreak of the war, attracting many among the youth and rural workers and providing the rebel army with a sizeable militia. The military support from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany further increased the popularity of the Falange, seen as the harbinger of a new era.³ The pre-eminence of the Army and the undisciplined and unruly character of the party, now deprived by the war of its original leaders, prevented the Falange from predominating over the other members of the rebel coalition and opened the way for its co-option by Francisco Franco. This phenomenon led some, most prominently Juan Linz, to define Francoist Spain as an authoritarian regime, which in its development had fallen short of the fascist model.⁴ However, this view seemed to dismiss the fact that the Falange had no chance of conquering power on its own, having failed to achieve the necessary military support it needed for a coup d'état during the last years of the Republic. Moreover, neither Fascism nor Nazism were static codified systems of rule at that time, ready for import. While the palingenetic nationalism key to fascism made national movements differ from each other, their dynamism made them highly adaptative to circumstance. It was in this context, as Aristotle Kallis has pointed out, that different actors interacted with fascism, borrowing from it different political ideas, practices, and lessons.⁵ This became even clearer during the Second World War. As Benjamin Martin has recently demonstrated, the New (fascist) Order sparked genuine interest because it seemed to address real local issues in a wide range of countries.⁶ While engagement with it was marked by an asymmetrical power dynamic, it did not entail directly copying Nazi-fascist ideas and methods. Rather it created a milieu in which different political movements pursued their own agendas, accepting, in the case of non-belligerent nations such as Spain, the Nazi-fascist hegemony insofar as it aided them in achieving their own aims and projects. In this vein, and as I will explore in this essay, the Falange's importance to the construction of the Francoist regime cannot be dismissed simply as a failed attempt to instate a fascist dictatorship in Spain. In fact, its evolution owed as much to the civil war and Spanish peculiarities as to the interactions with and between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Moreover, if, as Glenda Sluga has argued, the Spanish Civil War was one of 'the most obvious examples

of transnational links in the history of interwar fascism and anti-fascism',⁷ it seems necessary to explore the Spanish case within a broader European context, if we wish to properly understand the post-liberal departure of the 1930–1940s.

THE FALANGE'S BID FOR POWER

The Falange certainly failed in its attempt to fully fascisticise the Spanish state, clashing with the Army, the Church, and existing traditional structures in its attempts to consolidate its influence over the new state. Francoism, in the end, rested "on an informal authoritarian compromise, made up of clearly recognizable actors: the army, the church, the business community and a single party" united around their rejection of the anti-Spain and their loyalty to Franco.⁸ However, it still achieved a central position within the state party, otherwise imposed from above through the Unification Decree in April 1937.⁹ The new organisation resulted mainly from the combined forces of the Falange and Carlism, whose unparalleled growth, constituting around the 90% of all rebel militias,¹⁰ propelled them to the forefront of the emergent state. The civil conflict, the spirit of the times, and the different characters of each movement made it easier for the Falange to impose its will within the new organisation, engrossing its own numbers through both proselytism and conscription, and using that growth to justify its ascendance over the Carlist organisation. The precedence given by the rank-and-file Carlists to combat and the division at the top of the traditionalist organisation were also key to the Falange's success in this process.¹¹ Placed at the core of the Francoist regime, the party came to play a key role in the application of social policies and the regulation of the access to benefits, to the job market and positions of power, while attempting a political mobilisation and a re-education of society according to its fascist project that would, however, fall short of what was originally intended. Although the Falange's power was curtailed by the cabinet and other institutions, and its development as state party became constrained by what Paxton has called the "the four-way struggle for dominance",¹² it nevertheless acquired a political and social influence that she had never enjoyed before.

The transformation of the Falange into a state party began in the midst of the civil conflict. While the disappearance of its leaders facilitated the process, the process still depended on the cooperation of the subsequent General Secretaries. Similar to the general secretaries of the National

Fascist Party in Italy, their mission was to control and organise the party, to act as a middleman between the leader and the provinces, and between the party and the state. Every single Secretary General in the history of the regime put their loyalty to Franco over their plans to broaden the political influence of the party, an attitude that has led Aristotle Kallis to characterise the Falange as an example of “fascist pragmatism”.¹³ In fact, as we will see, the general secretaries effectively moderated the most radical Falangist initiatives, making a conscious effort to tame the rebellious character of many of its members, and secure their loyalty to Franco. It was also the General Secretaries’ mission to transform the single party into a transmission belt between state and society, which up until 1945 would serve as the only channel for the participation of the people in the construction and development of the New State.¹⁴ Tasked with the creation of a harmonic society, based on a strong adhesion of the people to the state, that could deactivate class struggle and social conflict through the nationalisation of the masses, the single party soon became a key pillar of the emergent regime. This development had a lot to do with the presence of Fascist and Nazi advisors in Spain during the civil war. It had been, in fact, Guglielmo Danzi, head of the propaganda office of the Italian military mission in Spain, who had successfully advised Franco on the need to merge all political organisations into a single party that he should rule over.¹⁵ The influence of Italian Fascism would also become highly noticeable in the genesis of what would, many years later, become the first of the Fundamental Laws of the Realm: the corporatist Labour *Fuero* of 1938 that sought to regulate a new kind of labour relations and become the driving force for a new structure of economy.

With the war still raging on the frontlines, and in an attempt to legitimise the emergent regime, Franco, encouraged by the Germans and assisted by the Italians, entrusted the party with devising the labour legislation of the new state. The project incorporated the basic tenets of the Fascist Labour Charter (*Carta del Lavoro*), mainly, the authoritarian regulation of labour relations through the abolition of the right to strike and lockout and the creation of the labour courts (*Magistratura del Lavoro*), as well as the establishment of a monopoly of corporations or trade unions. It also incorporated elements such as the recognition of the subsidiary role of the state’s economic interventionism, the re-educational character of the state-controlled trade unions, and the establishment of basic welfare provisions.¹⁶ This cannot come as a surprise given that, alongside prominent members of the Falange, both Ernesto Marchiandi,

labour attaché of the Italian embassy,¹⁷ and Eduardo Aunós, who had led the importation of some key aspects of Fascist corporatism into the labour legislation of Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship,¹⁸ had participated in the drafting of the text. This was a text, however, that drew not only upon the Fascist corporatist model but also the long-standing Catholic corporatism, codified in the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. The *Fuero* shared with them a strong nostalgia of the medieval guilds, which were believed to have produced a harmonic society in which the production system relied on the strength of the civil community. Equally the Spanish legislation directly incorporated *Quadragesimo Anno*'s definitions of minimum wage and corporatism.¹⁹ A brand of corporatism which aimed to provide a "third way solution to the twin excesses of liberalism and communism"²⁰ by encouraging, among other things, a close collaboration between employers and employees through guilds and associations. In fact, the influence of Catholic corporatism became stronger precisely because these aspects were favoured over one of the key tenets of the Fascist Charter that was finally disregarded, despite the protest of several Falangists: the political representation of economic interests, in a way that led to their participation in policy-making and economic planning. In addition, the Falangist attempt to surpass the limits of the corporative model and guarantee through the *Fuero* the national-sindicalist organisation of the State, transforming Spain into a "gigantic union of producers"²¹ was immediately halted. Any reference to it was removed from the final draft. Moreover, while, at least on paper, Italian corporations could assist in the regulation and coordination of the national economy, the Spanish legislation made sure any regulation remained tightly in the hands of the state. This transformed the vertical unions primarily into organisations that socialised, controlled, and, more importantly, re-educated the workers. This revealed not just a general wariness of the Falange's potential power but also a profound mistrust on part of both the cabinet and the single party's elite towards the working class. As Raimundo Fernández-Cuesta, Secretary General of FET, would put it, "until the old mentality of the working masses has not disappeared, these Unions must be placed under surveillance; [...] for a true and authentic vertical unionism to be possible, it's first necessary to have a strong, powerful, and single party, which can place them tightly under its control".²² While the control of the economy remained outside the remit of FET, it is important to note that the single party still achieved a key share of power, particularly related to social control and provision of

welfare support, the only aspect in which the party had total freedom of action.

It would be tempting to simply evaluate if fascist or catholic corporatism were the main influence behind the genesis of the *Fuero*. However, doing so would not only make us fall into several misleading assumptions, ignoring the many ways in which corporatism functioned during the interwar period as a “travelling theory” and point of contact between fascist and catholic circles.²³ In the 1930s, many state corporatists adopted *Quadragesimo Anno* as the flag for their cause, particularly in Austria, Portugal, and, of course, Italy. We can’t forget that even the Vatican had applauded, precisely in the encyclic *Quadragesimo Anno*, Fascist Italy’s implementation of some of their recommendations. While it had also issued a warning against the statist character of Italian corporatism,²⁴ it allowed many Catholics to interpret the encyclical as the Church’s embrace of Italian-style corporatism. This was even more noticeable in rebel Spain, where communism was the main enemy and fascism the main ally against it. However, it was precisely on the tenth anniversary of the Fascist Labour Charter that the popularity of fascist corporatism seemed to peak, being threatened by the emergence of another model which did not care for corporatism at all: Nazi Germany.²⁵ Within this context, Marchiandi could at the same time be somewhat satisfied with the stronger influence of catholic corporatism over the *Fuero*, hoping this would prevent a stronger German influence, potentially harmful to Italy,²⁶ and later criticised the shortcomings of the *Fuero* and the influence of social Catholicism and aspects of Nazism over the subsequent labour regulations. In his view, the Spanish legislation emphasised its own revolutionary character without explaining what this exactly meant.²⁷ In this sense, it was the interaction between external—the influence of fascist and catholic corporatism as well as Italo-German rivalry—and internal factors—mistrust of the working-class, debates among Francoist elites and wariness of the Falangist push for power—that helped shape one of the key pieces of early Francoist legislation and through this Francoism as a whole.

Inevitably, the Falange’s bid for power had clashed with the interests of the traditional elites. However, while the party might have lost one battle, it was not willing to lose the war. A group of radical Falangists who had coalesced around Ramón Serrano Suñer devised a new way to consolidate their power: the complete reorganisation of the single party, largely inspired by the Nazi regime. The project attempted a

complete re-structuring of the party with the aim of placing it “above any political hierarchy”, making it into the “single instrument for the education and orientation of the people, and the inspiration and appointment of the cabinets”.²⁸ In order to achieve such a transformation, they proposed the establishment of an elite within the party, the creation of a network of political schools, the re-organisation of the single party around three key vice-secretaries, the recognition of the Falange’s Foreign Service as an institution of parallel diplomacy, the establishment of a National Service for Public Education and Political Culture (*Servicio Nacional de Educación Popular y Cultura Política*), and, more importantly, full jurisdiction over the militias, which had been placed under military control in December 1936. The whole project emphasised the role of the party in the re-education of the people through the vertical unions, the Youth Front (*Frente de Juventudes*—FET’s youth wing) and the proposed cultural service—a precedent of the 1941 Vice-secretariat of Popular Education (*Vicesecretaría de Educación Popular*)—which aimed to give the state party power to intervene and control the nation’s cultural life, displaying quite similar aims to Goebbles’ propaganda ministry. However, the proposal that provoked Franco’s angry reaction was the one pertaining to the militias. The Falange’s desire not only to reclaim control over them but also to ensure their independence from the Army through the creation of their own military academies could not sit well with the dictator. It is unsurprising that he was to react by highlighting the Falange’s mistrust of his leadership and pulling the project altogether.²⁹ The Falange’s Secretary General supported Franco’s rejection of the plan. Eventually, the militia ceased to exist as a combat unit and was transformed into a channel for the recruitment within the universities of new blood into the Army. In this instance, as in many others, the Secretary General was key to the consolidation of Franco’s authority over the party.

This incident could easily highlight not only the interaction between the Nazi-fascist models and the Falange’s own agenda but also the general idea of Falangism as a failed and incomplete iteration of fascism. However, if we take a closer look at the policies carried out by FET’s general secretaries, it is easy to pinpoint how most proposals survived and were eventually implemented, albeit in a moderate form. That was the case of the network of political schools, the re-structuring of the single party around key vice-secretaries—one of them precisely the Vice-secretariat for Public Education, which oversaw all aspects of Spanish culture—and

the centrality of the party in the re-education of the people through the unions and the youth organisations.³⁰ No measure aimed to place the party above the state could ever be implemented under Franco's leadership, but this did not mean that the party failed to preserve key elements of fascism. Later on, under the leadership of a trustworthy elite, these same elements could be properly de-fascisticised in order to make Francoist Spain palatable in the post-war international order.

FALANGIST HOPES FOR THE NEW ORDER

In the meantime, however, it was precisely the interaction between the developing international situation, general fascination with Nazi Germany, and the Falangist desire to find in the German and Italian models new tools to further its own agenda and consolidate its gains that increased contacts between the Spanish elites and said countries. These contacts had begun already in the 1920s, allowing for the interaction in Spain of fascist and non-fascist ideas in many different ways.³¹ Now transformed into a state party, the so-called Falangist *pilgrimage* to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany acquired at times the character of a parallel diplomacy. In this vein, the passionate engagement of the FET's Women's Section (*Sección Femenina*) with the New Order project illustrated clearly how Nazi Germany had replaced Fascist Italy as the preferred model in the minds of many among the political elites of Francoist Spain, particularly at a time (1941–1944) when the New Order project gained more traction. Moreover, it demonstrates not just how the Falange's engagement with the Nazi-fascist project stemmed from a blend of ideological affinity and political opportunism.³² As Pilar Primo de Rivera, head of *Sección Femenina*, would put it, “our trip to Germany has served, particularly, for us to realize the potential of the Falange”.³³ Spanish engagement with the New Order stemmed from different motivations. Some elements, most notably Spanish Falangists and Blue Division (*División Azul*) volunteers, committed to the project because they identified with or admired the Nazi ideology. That was the case of a fervent member of FET who demanded a central role for the militias:

It is important to remember that in Italy and Germany, the members of the fascist party or the SA, armed to the teeth, were feared as one fears fire, because they represented more than an authority figure, while here people cheekily mock us and we, the party members, do not even have the

recourse of slapping their tooth out of their mouth because we would be arrested and taken in front of the judge as the average Joe.³⁴

Others looked at Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy because they saw their future success—be that in imperial, professional, or political terms—following the eventual victory of the Axis forces. At the same time, many among the Spanish radical right, not necessarily Falangists, projected on Nazi Germany some of their most pressing concerns. For them, Hitler became a crusader, the gatekeeper of Christian European civilisation, even the avenger of Spain, who would settle the score with the nation's traditional enemies, most prominently Britain.³⁵ Spanish–German collaboration, however, was not exclusively rooted in an admiration for the new Nazi-Fascist order, fear or political and strategic opportunism, but in a highly positive and lasting image of Germany that stoked Spaniards' fascination with National Socialism.

The period of 1937–1943 marked the highpoint of Nazi-Fascist influence in Spain, but fascination with Nazi Germany died slowly afterwards, particularly among Falangists. Here, the Falangist reticence to let go of the idea of the New Order derived from both ideological kinship and political opportunism, as letting go of the German ally meant acknowledging that the best moment for the Falangist project had passed. However, the party's survival depended on it. For this reason, from 1943 onwards, the then Secretary General of FET, José Luis de Arrese, initiated the rhetorical shift and, in many ways, promoted the practical defascistisation of the Franco regime. Under the shock of the Italian defeat in 1943, Arrese began to highlight the centrality of Catholicism and the development of an organic democracy, in order to free the regime from its totalitarian stigma. He even went as far as to deny the totalitarian aspects of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, characterising them simply as “political systems of rule led by two extraordinary men”.³⁶ However, Arrese's continuous and concealed support of Nazi officials in Spain, something that I have examined elsewhere,³⁷ was perfectly compatible with a pragmatic and open renunciation of those same influences when the situation called for it. In so doing, Arrese became a perfect example of that blend of opportunism and ideology that characterised FET's approach to the Axis.

BUREAUCRACY AND SOCIAL CONTROL

This fascination with the New Order as well as the necessary transformation of the Falange into a state party led to the establishment of organisations that competed with the state. The party's desire to fascisticise the public administration and complete the conquest of the state resulted in new tensions with the state. While the general secretaries remained loyal to Franco, they did try to broaden the party's reach as much as possible. Therefore, FET proceeded to equate party and state functionaries and even suggested to make adhesion to the party mandatory for anyone who aspired to become a state functionary,³⁸ a measure that seems copied from the Italian model. Equally, the party counted on different channels to influence policy, namely the inclusion of the Secretary General in the cabinet and the establishment of the National Council, a deliberative organ, such as the Italian Great Fascist Council,³⁹ that would be incorporated into the new *Cortes* in the early 40s.⁴⁰ These channels, however, did not guarantee the party's influence over the cabinet. In fact, the whole process, led by the general secretaries, gave way to FET's necessary bureaucratisation, which, according to Rodríguez Barreira, deprived the Falange of any dynamism within the regime.⁴¹ In this regard, some authors like Aquarone and De Felice have stated, for the Italian case, that the bureaucratisation of the party necessarily led to its de-politicisation.⁴² And yet, I would argue that, in the case of the Falange, it was only after this bureaucratisation that the National Council began to function properly, aiding in the preparation of laws and regulations,⁴³ which brings such an assumption about FET's de-politicisation into question. Moreover, it is important to note that political power was exerted not just through the cabinet and the legislation, but through social control—an area where FET continued to play an important role.

While I have already provided some key examples in which the interaction and exchange of ideas with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany did not grant the Falange the influence that its leaders aimed for, it is important to look at what FET did achieve through its allegiance to Franco. It was the establishment of a network of capillary organisations regulating the population's relations with the state that was key for increasing the Falange's presence among the people and for the construction of consent, both active and passive.⁴⁴ These organisations aimed at the construction of a solid national community and the social policies they served to implement represented, at times, the kind face of a regime that remained

otherwise repressive. It is not surprising that one of the first laws passed by the rebel government was the Labour Charter, as the regime looked for different avenues towards political legitimisation.⁴⁵ It also served to rhetorically affirm the influence of the Falange, as all social policy came to be portrayed not as a right of the population but as a gracious concession of power, that is, of Franco and its party: “no group of Spaniards has sufficient strength to decide anything on its own, [...] Do not flatter yourselves; be sure that you, on your own, do not have enough strength to achieve any revolutionary change, and that, if there is today so much tolerance for social advances, it is not due to people fearing you or liking you but due to their fear to confront the Falange and the *Caudillo*”.⁴⁶

The Falange participated in the direct elaboration of all laws concerning the development of these policies, and even when it had to renounce certain initiatives, it retained the power to practically apply said policies.⁴⁷ Falangist organisations like Winter Relief—clearly inspired by the Nazi *Winterhilfe*—the Women Section, the Vertical Unions (*Sindicato Vertical*), and the Youth Front, among others, served this purpose and, in doing so, they provoked popular reactions. It was common, for example, for women to find inventive ways to avoid the social service or for rural workers to refuse handing over their grain to the National Service of Wheat.⁴⁸ The welfare measures and social benefits managed by the Trade Union Services (*Obras Sindicales*)⁴⁹ were particularly significant but they often led to an instrumental use of Francoist legislation. These organisations contributed to the creation of a welfare system, managing the access to and distribution of national subsidies and national insurance schemes, social housing, etc. This favoured the creation of a patronage network controlled and administered by the single party. Many of these subsidies were in fact minimal but it is important not to discount the relief that they could bring to many who were living in terrible conditions. While this did not serve to effectively integrate the workers within the fascist project, it could attract the favour of less politicised sectors of the population.⁵⁰ However, it also meant that many made an instrumental use of their adhesion to the party to obtain access to the welfare benefits the state had put in place. In the early 1940s, the regime proceeded to unify the Falange and government representation in cities and provinces, refashioning a new model of state clientelism⁵¹ that combined the patronage networks of the old elites and the Falangist newcomers. The administration of subsidies and the creation of new networks of patronage provided the Falange with a channel to influence society and eventually try to

(unsuccessfully) re-educate it. As Emilio Gentile would say, it became a 'Great Pedagogue'.⁵²

The Falange had indeed become a parallel bureaucracy but one that remained in direct contact with the people. The party served as well as a channel to access the job market, particularly in the case of the ex-combatants. The state reserved 80% of all new positions in public administration for former combatants, those who had been imprisoned by the Republic and those who had become disabled as a result of the confrontation. This consideration expanded, at least on paper, to women.⁵³ At the same time, any ex-combatant who applied for membership was automatically accepted into the party.⁵⁴ This established war experience as a necessary personal asset that contributed to the integration of the bureaucratic apparatus of the single party and guarantee combatants an improvement of their living conditions.⁵⁵ Additionally, many positions, not only in the public service, required a certificate of adhesion to the new regime, one that could be extended by the party, although this was not the only institution capable of doing so.⁵⁶ War experience was also the key factor that determined someone's suitability to serve in the town halls. In this sense, Falangist membership could open the doors of power.⁵⁷ Furthermore, in May 1944, the single party created the National Education Junta (*Junta de Educación Nacional*), in charge of extending certificates of adhesion to those who prepared the exams to acquire a professorship in the University.⁵⁸ These measures aimed to increase the Falange's support among the population; however, they also benefited the regime as a whole more than the Falange as a party.

CONCLUSIONS

Within a system of rule in which the party could never place itself above the state, it was Spain's contact with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, FET's push for power, which came to be counterbalanced by the Army and the Church, and the evolution of the international situation that shaped the emergent Francoist Falange. This ended up being an organisation that did not necessarily represent the heartfelt ambitions of the Falange *serranista* but which adapted to the circumstances, acquiring any pocket of political influence available and guaranteeing its own survival, awaiting its opportunity to reactivate its bid for power. The Falange underwent a process of bureaucratisation because this was a necessary step for its complex transformation from a combative party, created for

the conquest of the State, into a state party, destined to contribute to the control and re-education of society under new political parameters. This phenomenon along with a theoretical model that presumes the finished nature of the Nazi-Fascist models has led more often than not to dismiss FET as a failure, in effect minimising, not always intentionally, what it actually achieved. However, equating bureaucratisation with de-politicisation ignores the fact that the bureaucratic apparatus “controls to a variable degree the decision-making processes of the state”, thanks to which it can effectively curb “the aims of the organization it serves”.⁵⁹ This was even more the case for a bureaucracy based on ideological, not professional, criteria, a politicised bureaucracy that controlled key mechanisms in the state machinery, as well as the distribution of resources and favours.

The Spanish Civil War came to transform a small combative fascist party into a state party, a conduit between state and society, and the only channel for the participation of the people in the construction of the New State until 1945. This transformation, which owed as much to the civil war and Spanish peculiarities as to the interactions between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and the construction of the New Order, entailed the Falange’s necessary bureaucratisation but it did not imply its complete de-politicisation. Therefore, the party’s importance in the construction of the regime cannot be dismissed simply as a failed attempt to instate a fascist dictatorship in Spain. As mentioned in the introductory section, fascistisation was a process that could be stopped and even reversed, as proven by the Spanish case. However, it is important to avoid dismissing the Falangist experience simply as a failure to meet the benchmark of an ideal fascist model. The Falange never completed the conquest of the state or controlled the cabinet but the conflict allowed it to obtain ample political power and to expand its reach over society through the control of instruments and spaces of socialisation, in a way that would not have otherwise been possible.

In this context, Griffin’s concept of ‘para-fascism’ was pivotal in conceptualising and exploring this process. However, only by focusing on what ‘para-fascist’ or ‘fascisticised’ movements really achieved, instead of looking at what they did not, can we truly evaluate their importance not only within their own national boundaries but also as actors within an illiberal political milieu. In this respect, their interactions with other fascist and para-fascist movements and regimes came to be shaped both

by a general belief in the emergence of a new political paradigm that could replace democracy and by their own political agendas and circumstances, in ways that often fluctuated between opportunism and *realpolitik*.

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Brazil in the Era of Fascism: The “New State” of Getúlio Vargas

António Costa Pinto

THE AUTHORITARIAN ‘REVERSE WAVE’ OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD IN LATIN AMERICA

In his review of the *Oxford Handbook of Fascism* (2009), edited by Richard Bosworth, Roger Griffin stressed that it was ironic that the task was given to an historian that “has in the past often expressed his irritation with those concerned with ‘the history of fascism’ (or rather ‘comparative fascist studies’) (...) In some respects, then, asking Bosworth to be the *Duce* of OUP’s ambitious project is like asking a vegan restaurateur to head a team of cooks preparing a medieval banquet where spits rotate slowly, laden with basted pigs and lambs”.¹ In fact, and contrary to Bosworth, as Roger Griffin demonstrates in his masterful *The Nature of Fascism* (1996), Mussolini Dictatorship provided powerful institutional and political inspiration for other regimes of the “Era of Fascism”. Mussolini’s type of leadership, institutions and operating methods already encapsulated the dominant models of the twentieth-century dictatorship at least in three domains: personalised leadership, the single or dominant party, and the ‘technico-consultative’ political institutions, based on

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corporatism.² In this chapter in homage to Roger Griffin, I develop these features looking at the case of Getúlio Vargas' Brazil.³

Latin America participated in what has been called the first wave of democratisation, and in the subsequent 'reverse wave' that by 1942 had significantly reduced the number of democratic regimes in the world.⁴ Regardless of the political regime classification adopted or the different periodisation, by the early 1930s—and especially during the Great Depression—there was 'a surge of reactionary regimes (that) reduced the proportion of competitive systems to a low of 19% in 1943'.⁵ Between 1930 and 1934, there were 13 successful coups, followed by a further seven in the last years of the decade.⁶ During this time, an impressive spectrum of authoritarian regimes was established, some of which were very instable and poorly institutionalised, while others were more consolidated. The "New State" of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil is a paradigmatic case.

As has been noted several times, from both a comparative and transnational perspective, the authoritarian 'reverse wave' of the interwar period was a process that was 'contaminated by mutual emulations that are affirmed in their national development (but which are) part of the same historical cycle'.⁷ In this chapter, we analyse the processes of institutional reform in 1930s Brazil paying particular attention to how domestic political actors rely on the 'heuristics of availability' in order to pursue similar authoritarian changes while looking at institutional models of fascism and corporatism for their own countries.⁸

VARGAS'S 'NEW STATE'

The New State established in Brazil by Getúlio Vargas (1937–1945) is the most important case of the institutionalisation of corporatism in an authoritarian setting in Latin America. While corporatist representation was outlined in the 1937 Constitution, social corporatism had a durable legacy and Vargas's dictatorship represented a much more powerful break with political liberalism than was the case with other contemporary regimes in Latin America. On the other hand, in Brazil, the diffusion of corporatism was more developed in conservative and fascist political circles and movements and as a proposed reform of political representation within a liberal framework. In fact, from the beginning of the 1930s, several important steps towards the institutionalisation of social corporatism had been taken, and the representation of interests institutionalised

in the 1934 constitutional assembly and later consolidated with the New State in 1937.

The 1930 Revolution opened the crisis of the old republic's oligarchic liberalism in Brazil and launched a complex political process marked by a great deal of political instability prior to the 1937 coup.⁹ Mobilising junior officers, the so-called *tenentes*, some high-ranking officials, favouring a more centralised and efficient state by dismantling the clientelistic political structures of the old republic and its regional political parties, the political forces that came to power with Getúlio Vargas in November 1930 were more heterogeneous than was the case with other similar processes in Latin America. Nevertheless, one of the main promises of the provisional government was to call elections to a constitutional assembly. Getúlio Vargas was already a well-established politician during the old republic, before he became the main civilian leader of the 1930 Revolution: he had been governor of Rio Grande do Sul, a deputy, a minister, and was a presidential candidate in 1930 election, standing against the nominated candidate of President Washington Luis.¹⁰ If we can trace his ideological origins, the most important influence was probably the authoritarian positivism of Julio de Castilhos, the all-powerful governor of his native state, Rio Grande do Sul, in the turn of the century.¹¹ With its vague authoritarian and anti-oligarchic party programme, after taking power Vargas's provisional government was in no rush to establish a new constitutional order and instead almost immediately set about strengthening central power through the appointment of trusted *interventores* in each of the states. However, the Constitutionalist Revolt of 1932, an insurrection led by the State of São Paulo that demanded the restoration of the 1898 Liberal Constitution and which was defeated by Vargas, caused him to call a constitutional assembly to approve a new Constitution in 1934.

With an army strengthened by the conflict, he accepted the elections but had strong reservations about the new Constitution that limited his power and restricted his mandate to just one term. From 1934 to 1937, a number of crises were marked by political polarisation and tensions that suggested either the reestablishment of the liberal order or a strengthening of authoritarianism with the growing importance of two extra-parliamentary radical political movements: the fascists of AIB and the communist-supported National Liberation Alliance (ANL—*Aliança Nacional Libertadora*).

Following an attempted putsch led by ANL in November 1935, Vargas declared a state of siege and ‘war on communism’, reinforcing his alliance with the military leadership and civilian conservative forces, including the Catholic Church. The repressive apparatus was dramatically extended, with the banning, arrest, and purge of left-wing activists. When, after several extensions of the state of emergency, the majority in Congress called for it to end and, faced with his inability to stand for re-election in 1938 and after some hesitations, Vargas and his associates decided to act. Inventing a fake communist conspiracy, the ‘Cohen Plan’, and with the support of the head of the army, Vargas decreed the New State dictatorship on November 10, 1937.

Corporatism peaked with the New State, but its ideological and institutional presence had been a part of the official political discourse since 1930. At the start of 1931, Vargas was clear when he declared that one of his goals was to ‘destroy the political oligarchs and to establish representation by class rather than through the old system of individual representation that was flawed as an expression of the popular will’.¹² The adoption of corporatism was, therefore, a trademark of the 1930 Revolution that immediately shaped both the elections to the constitutional assembly and the 1934 Constitution.¹³ Throughout the 1930s, corporatism—which was associated with authoritarianism, centralism, and nationalism—was assumed by several different emerging political forces, ranging from fascists to social Catholics and ‘passing through several *tenentista* and *Getulista* factions’. The political discourse in favour of technical governments was also very powerful during this period.

Around 40 deputies to the 1933 constitutional assembly represented professional interests, and debates between the different options for corporatist representation were intense. With the 1934 Constitution, corporatist representation became a fact at both federal and the regional levels. The cleavage between the liberals and corporatists, and within this latter group, was clear. The most polarising aspect of the debate concerned the powers of the corporatist institutions (about whether they were to be consultative or deliberative) and whether representation would be through technical councils or in parliament. This latter option was chosen, with Vargas’s support, for the constitutional assembly, against the proposals that were supported by business groups in the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP—Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo).¹⁴ Integral corporatist representation of the type proposed by the AIB was always a minority view. While discussing

the option for a bicameral parliament, the 1934 Constitution established a mixed parliament, with the same number of professional and direct elected representatives of the previous constitutional assembly.

Social corporatism was implemented with the establishment of the Ministry of Labour, Industry, and Commerce (MTIC—Ministério do Trabalho, Indústria e Comércio) in 1930, which was also known as the 'ministry of revolution'.¹⁵ The eminent corporatist intellectual Oliveira Viana was appointed legal adviser to the MTIC in 1932. Decree 19.700 of March 1931 gradually replaced independent trade unions with state-controlled syndicates. At the same time, several measures, including the eight-hour day, paid holidays, and many other benefits, were progressively introduced. The 1934 Constitution restored some trade union independence; however, with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1935, they were once more subjected to the state's corporatist intervention, later fully institutionalised.

AIB was perhaps the most important fascist movement in Latin America and like its European counterparts made corporatism part of its political identity and plans for its future integral state.¹⁶ Founded in 1932 by Plínio Salgado, a politician and Catholic and modernist intellectual, its main leaders included Miguel Reale and Gustavo Barroso. AIB quickly grew into a national organisation and adopted the militia structure typical of fascist parties. Integral corporatism was supported by many of the movement's founders, including Olbiano de Melo and others, even before they joined the AIB.¹⁷

AIB's charismatic leader was influenced more by the Portuguese Integralism of António Sardinha (Integralismo Lusitano) and by Charles Maurras than he was by the Italian Fascism. Nevertheless, the AIB's leadership was well aware of European versions of corporatism and its theorists, especially as promoted in Italy and Portugal.¹⁸ Miguel Reale, the AIB's national secretary for doctrine, was influenced more by Italian Fascism, even though he was less enthusiastic with its organic totality.¹⁹ The same could be said of Plínio Salgado, although this element of AIB's political programme was developed largely by Reale, who was the AIB's most structured corporatist ideologue. Reale's model was for a political representation project with the corporations the official bodies in which members of the different professions would be represented. Each corporation would elect its representative to a national corporatist chamber, which, with the Senate to which members of 'non-economic' (i.e. social

and cultural) corporations would be sent, would form the bicameral National Congress.²⁰

Corporatism was an integral part of the AIB's identity and of the association its leaders and followers made with European fascism. Plínio called for a basic form of corporatism that was created through the organisation of professions from the municipal to the national level and which rejected state corporatism.²¹ Some years later, the integralist leader said he wanted to place himself in the centre, midway between Reale's fascism and Jeová Mota's leftist social corporatism.²²

When Getúlio Vargas led the 1937 coup, he was supported by the AIB, while Francisco Campos—the minister closest to fascism—was an apparent intermediary; however, the AIB very quickly realised the new regime was not going to give them the political space and integration they desired. Although all other parties were banned, while the AIB was allowed to continue as a think tank, tensions with the government increased, leading—as in many other cases—to it also being banned and some of its leaders, including Plínio Salgado, exiled, even as many others joined the new regime. Following the AIB's attack on the Guanabara Palace in May 1938, they were persecuted by the New State.

Two intellectual politicians and close associates of Vargas, Francisco Campos and Oliveira Viana, played decisive roles in the institutionalisation of corporatism during the 1930s. While he never held political office, we could add to the list Manoilescu's Brazilian translator, Azevedo Amaral.²³ These three were always present when referring to the relationship between authoritarian intellectuals and Vargas's New State.²⁴ Their influences were different, however. Campos was undoubtedly Vargas's main ideologist in the late 1930s, as well as serving as minister for education and justice. He wrote the 1937 Constitution and many of Vargas's main proclamations during the early days of the New State. Oliveira Viana had occupied a senior role within the Ministry of Labour since 1932 and was one of the main authors of the corporatist labour legislation. Azevedo Amaral remained an important publicist and author who was associated with the regime's propaganda apparatus, although he never held formal political office.²⁵

Francisco Campos was perhaps the New State's most articulate ideological creator, since it was he who designed the new regime's institutions in the 1937 Constitution, that brought an end to the state of emergency that had existed since 1935.²⁶ Like Vargas, Campos was more attuned to authoritarian positivism and less influenced in his youth by European

Catholic and reactionary traditionalism.²⁷ Author of a large selection of political theory and law works, Campos began his political career in traditional parties, and following the 1930 Revolution became a fellow traveller with Getúlio Vargas, while at the same time moving towards an elitist anti-parliamentary position. Later, he became the main ideologue of the establishment of a personalised dictatorship endowed with propaganda tools and mass organisations.²⁸ Soon after the 1930 coup, he and Gustavo Capanema organised the government-supported fascist-style militia, the October Legion. He served as minister of education and health in 1931 and in 1937 was appointed minister of justice. Campos was the principal author of Vargas's coup proclamation and stood in the background directing the dictator's authoritarian discourse throughout the regime's early years as the New State was being institutionalised, although many of its principals never got off the paper.²⁹

Campos was a great legitimiser of an authoritarian state as the only alternative to the 'anachronism' of liberal democratic institutions in a mass society. He wrote:

The masses are fascinated by charismatic personalities. This is what is at the heart of political integration. The larger and more active the masses, the more political integration becomes possible only through the dictatorship of a personal will. Dictatorship is the political regime of the masses. The only natural expression of the will of the masses is the plebiscite: that is to say, of acclamation and appeal before choice.³⁰

Campos was also a supporter of social and political corporatism as the main antidote to communism: as justice minister in 1940, he stated that 'Corporatism kills communism, just as capitalism generates communism'.³¹ As other intellectual politicians of the interwar period, Campos used alternative concepts of democracy to legitimise the regime, but even as he tried to situate his authoritarian projects midway between liberal and totalitarian experiences, Campos stood closer to the latter than to the former. The 'exaltation of the leader, the break with democratic institutions and the dialogue with intellectuals who inspired fascism is very clear', to the extent that even supporters of the New State noticed.³² As Vargas's secretary was to write: 'Let's acknowledge that the accusation [of fascism] was not a lie'.³³ It was probably this association with fascism that led Vargas to not reappointing Campos in the government when the international winds changed direction in 1942.

Oliveira Viana, one of Brazil's leading intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century, served as legal adviser to the MTIC from 1932 to 1940.³⁴ No examination of Brazilian authoritarianism or corporatism can avoid Oliveira Viana, as he was the leading figure in the project of instrumental authoritarianism—that is, presenting an authoritarian regime as the means of overcoming the dilemmas of Brazil's modernisation.³⁵ Viana's modernising approach was less present in other Latin American corporatists: in fact, he 'perceived himself, and was perceived by others, to be a modern, scientific thinker – not a nostalgic reactionary'.³⁶

Oliveira Viana's corporatist project was the central element to legitimise the transformation of the state and to be the main bulwark for the social peace that would get the country moving from top to bottom.³⁷ His 'authoritarian democracy [was] a democracy with authority, and not liberty, as its essential principle' and that it also should not have such political institutions as a single party.³⁸ 'A sovereign president, who exerts his power in the name of the nation, and is subordinate to and dependent upon it alone', ought to be enough, since parties were the vehicles of the oligarchy: 'the New State is not a single-party regime: it is a single-president regime'.³⁹ Aware that Vargas had banned parties—even though they continued to exist at the municipal level—Viana thought it was 'necessary to abolish their component parts', and that there was only one way to achieve this—through the corporatisation of municipal representation with the establishment of 'obligatory professional representation in the establishment of municipal councils'.⁴⁰

To emphasise the instrumental and transitory nature of his authoritarianism, Viana differentiated his project from the Italian Fascist model, stressing the technico-juridical nature of his approach and restating both Manóiesco and the New Deal jurists, but all the while maintaining the authoritarian model.⁴¹ In fact, while his legislative contribution was largely restricted to social corporatism, as far as Viana was concerned, 'the corporatist project and the strengthening of the presidential system of government were the two touchstones of the new authoritarian democracy'.⁴² A president, we must not forget, that Viana wanted to be elected by a corporatist electoral college of political, administrative, professional, and cultural institutions. While as a consultant to the Labour Ministry, he was not the only author of the legislation shaping Brazilian social corporatism, he was its backbone and the leading Brazilian exponent of the 'corporatist utopia of the good society'.⁴³

During the 1930s, the Brazilian Catholic Church redoubled its struggle against communism. Ever since the 1930 Revolution, the Church had followed and moved closer to Getúlio Vargas in an apparent 're-encounter with the state'.⁴⁴ Catholic corporatism also followed this dynamic, both in the Church's independent activities and through its collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, with which Catholic experts had been involved since 1931 in drawing up corporatist legislation. The press and intellectuals surrounding Catholic Action highlighted European models such as Salazar's New State.⁴⁵ Under the leadership of Cardinal Sebastião Leme, who was archbishop of Rio de Janeiro from 1930 to 1942, the programme to 're-Christianize society' was developed as the reapproximation of the Church and state continued during the 1930s. The Constitution of 1934 re-established religious education in public schools, provided public financial support for Catholic organisations, and secured a convergence between Catholic social corporatism and the projects being promoted by Vargas.

The cardinal was considerably sympathetic to the fascist AIB, an organisation in which many Catholic laymen, and even priests, held senior political offices. In a confidential statement issued in September 1937, Cardinal Leme stated 'that it [Integralism] presently constitutes one of the social forces best organised to defend God, nation and family against atheistic communism' and that its programme of social reforms 'closely follows the whole orientation of Catholic doctrine'.⁴⁶ Leme came out in support of the 1937 Coup, the leaders of which he said 'Providence has entrusted the destiny of Brazil'.⁴⁷ He also spoke in favour of its agreements with the New State, silencing voices that disagreed with the state corporatism of Getúlio Vargas, which shared a similar dynamic with other authoritarian experiments of the time.

The Constitution of 1937, which was written by the minister of justice, Francisco Campos, was directly inspired by the Polish Constitution introduced by Pilsudski in 1935, and which gave the president extensive powers and legislative authority.⁴⁸ Legislative power was formally exercised by a parliament elected by an electoral college largely consisting of members of the council of municipalities and the federal council that replaced the Senate, consisting of representatives of the states and ten presidential nominees.

The National Economy Council (CEN—Conselho da Economia Nacional) collaborated with parliament. CEN was a consultative chamber, consisting of five sections (Industry and Crafts, Agriculture, Commerce,

Transport, and Credit) and made up of representatives of several branches of national production, that was designed to promote the corporatist organisation of the national economy. As a law professor and supporter of Vargas wrote in 1937, in a clear reference to the Portuguese New State Constitution of 1933, 'The CEN will be our Corporate Chamber'.⁴⁹ Its members were elected by their respective associations, with 'equal representation for employees and employers'.⁵⁰ All legislation affecting the national economy had to be submitted to it for review, which also gave it some legislative authority. Its members were chosen by an electoral college made up of unions and employers organisations. The President of the Republic was also elected by corporatist bodies (local authorities, CEN, chamber of deputies, federal council).

There were extensive principles in the Constitution concerning the corporatist foundations of national production that ensured the economy of national labour would be organised in a corporation.⁵¹ Like other authoritarian constitutions and labour codes of the 1930s, the inspiration of Italian Labour Charter was evident, with Article 135 of the new Constitution reproducing, almost word for word, Articles 7 and 9 of the Italian charter.⁵² For Getúlio's secretary and most observers at the time, the most obvious aspect of its fascist inspiration was the 'chapter on economic organization based on corporatism'.⁵³ In the New State Constitution, the break with liberalism was much clearer than in other dictatorships of the fascist era.

Although it wasn't put to a plebiscite or implemented, the 1937 charter was the ideal-type regime reflected in the propaganda.⁵⁴ In his speeches, Vargas often spoke about the legitimacy of the new Constitution as the foundation of the New State that had replaced political democracy with economic democracy.⁵⁵

The new Information and Propaganda Department (DIP—Departamento de Informação e Propaganda) that was established in 1939 and which reported directly to the President of the Republic coordinated the creation of Vargas's image as well as the regime's censorship and cultural policy. DIP, which was responsible for the systemisation of an ideal type of state and society relations in the New State, had functions very similar to those of its European peers, ranging from Italian Fascism to Salazar's SPN (Secretariado para a Propaganda Nacional). Just like them, DIP published dozens of texts in which corporatism was presented as the official model for the new regime, both at the elite and at the mass level.⁵⁶

The word chief also began to be used to define Vargas's leadership, especially during the 1 May celebrations, when Vargas was associated with the new official unions and workers in general.⁵⁷ New nationalist civic ceremonies, such as the hour of independence and the youth parade, were used to involve youth in the new regime, despite the failure to create the national youth organisation Francisco Campos had proposed in 1938.⁵⁸ These events, along with the other symbols of proximity to European fascism, did not begin to disappear until after Brazil entered World War II on the side of the Allies.⁵⁹

The New State did not create a single or dominant party. Following the AIB putsch of 1938, several New State strategists, including Francisco Campos and his private secretary Luis Vergara, advised Vargas to create a single party, which Vargas then sought to do. A series of meetings were held to discuss creating a regime-supporting party that would be formed around the powerful *interventores* in each of the states. It even had a name: National Civic Legion (LCN—Legião Cívica Nacional). However, there was also opposition to this proposal from among various members of regional elites, and Vargas feared any new party could create a focus for tensions that could weaken his hold on power.

In many official New State documents, the term ‘political’ was often replaced by ‘administration’, praising ‘technicians as a counterpoint to politics, which was described as the dirty side of private interests’.⁶⁰ In fact, bureaucratic-administrative centralisation was a trait of the dictatorship, and throughout the New State's eight-year duration, Vargas provided continuity both to the restructuring of the Brazilian state from a more interventionist perspective and for economic nationalism. Several important steps were also taken to promote political and administrative centralisation under the authoritarian command of the National Chief.

One month after the coup, and with the support of the majority of governors, and despite resistance and compromise, *interventores* became the main actors in the political centralisation of state leaderships.⁶¹ *Interventores* had executive and legislative powers at the regional level that transformed them into political coordinators who could ‘interlink New State oligarchies, ministers and the President of the Republic’.⁶² From April 1939, these *interventores* were made responsible to the administrative departments that replaced elected state assemblies and were granted the power to approve budgets and issue decree laws. The members of these bodies were nominated by the president. Needless to say, the party elites, while weakened, survived and ‘negotiated’ within these new

structures at the regional level, in a process of partial continuity and renewal.⁶³

Another important feature of the New State administration was the multiplication and overlapping of different bureaucratic-administrative bodies that allowed the intervention of the federal government. Some of these had been created during the 1930s, such as the technical councils, institutes, and other federal agencies that became important instruments of economic planning, coordination, and regulation.⁶⁴ In the absence of a single party and a corporatist or authoritarian parliament, these New State governing bodies replaced the traditional representation channels to become the focus for lobbying and the exertion of political pressure. As a contemporary academic observer remarked, Brazil under Vargas became 'Technically, a (non-party) full-fledged dictatorship'.⁶⁵ As Vargas proclaimed in the 1938 May Day celebration,

I came to establish harmony and tranquillity between employees and their employers [...] However, harmony and tranquillity between employees and employers is not enough. The collaboration of all in the spontaneous effort and common labours are required for the good of this harmony.⁶⁶

The new regime crowned the victory of social corporatism in an authoritarian setting, and on May 1, 1943, after nearly a decade of social legislation, the Consolidated Labour Laws (CLT), which finally systematised and applied labour legislation in Brazil, were introduced.

In 1939, the trade unions became subordinate to the state, losing their organisational independence. In 1940, Vargas established the minimum wage and in 1941, the labour courts.⁶⁷ Union funds were tightly controlled and the *imposto sindical* (the compulsory union tax) was created, the intention of which was to provide health and welfare benefits for union members. Union leaders were vetted by the political police. As in some other corporatist dictatorships, any kind of national confederation of labour was banned. Unions were organised in industry-wide syndicates which had a monopoly of representation within a tripartite system of conciliation and arbitration that was largely modelled on Italian Fascist legislation. State protection came under almost total union control, which was opposed by many employers.⁶⁸ Social Catholic organisations feared this statist social corporatism while promoting a more pluralist and societal approach. Industrialists reacted to this statist approach as well,

although with Vargas being partially successful with their integration into the new structures of social peace.⁶⁹

One student of the Brazilian labour movement noted that the fascist label 'fails to capture the intellectual and legal origins of the social and labour legislation that preceded 1937'.⁷⁰ While the clearly authoritarian and Catholic hand of Oliveira Viana drafted much of the labour legislation, other contributors had also been present since the early 1930s. In fact, Vianna stood alongside integralists, traditionalist Catholics, and 'a widening array of lawyers [who were] drawn into the elaboration, re-elaboration and administration of social and labour legislation'.⁷¹ This was the case of many of the labour codes introduced by authoritarian regimes in Europe and Latin America as well. As the ABC of political analysis notes, similar structures may have very different functions across political systems, and in the case of Vargas's Brazil, corporatism left a legacy of inclusion that 'allowed a claim to citizenship and a legitimate voice in public life'.⁷²

CONCLUSION: THE END OF THE 'NEW STATE'?

From 1942, the New State's authoritarian institutional innovation lost its impetus. The international factor and the US's Pan-American strategy in Latin America also had a big impact on Brazil, so this new dynamic could not have been strange. In the late 1930s, Vargas took a pragmatic stance in his foreign policy, attempting to take advantage of the rivalry between the great powers. After the 1937 coup, this position remained unchanged.⁷³ In 1938 though, Vargas distanced himself from the native fascism represented by the AIB, repressed Nazi-inspired movements, and declared the German ambassador *persona non grata*. Notwithstanding the reservations of some segments of the army leadership, Brazil broke off relations with the Axis and became the first Latin American country to declare war on the Axis powers, and the only one sending troops to the front in Europe.⁷⁴ During the war years, Brazil got in turn 70 per cent of all US aid given to Latin America.⁷⁵

In 1943, Vargas began to suggest that there would, eventually, be a move towards democratisation just as he, rather ironically, began organising a top-down party ahead of elections.⁷⁶ Vargas's social corporatism sought to create an apolitical labour movement consisting of unions that would function as consultative organs of government, with a model of

class harmony and collaboration, but from 1943, when Vargas was anticipating a process of regime change, he started to make a direct appeal to the working class.⁷⁷ In 1944, Minister of Labour, Alexandre Marcondes Filho, called for a plebiscite that was never carried out, proposing a ‘semi-corporatist’ state, with a CEN complementing, rather than replacing, the legislature.⁷⁸ The regime began to recognise and accept the political and electoral potential of organised labour, and Vargas strengthened his links with the working class, allowing union elections and even tolerating strikes, which, under the labour law, were illegal. *Trabalhismo* and the ‘populist’ Vargas were in the making.⁷⁹ The military, afraid of this dynamic, overthrew Vargas in 1945, but many of the legacies of the Estado Novo survived and even the ‘Father of the Poor’ would come back in the 1950s.

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CHAPTER 12

From Slime Mould to Rhizome Revisited: The Anglophone Neo-Nazi Cultic Milieu, Past and Present

Paul Jackson

THE ‘HABITAT’ FOR FASCISM

In his much-discussed article for *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* from 2004, Roger Griffin set out a framework for thinking about fascism’s transformation throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. In particular, he described the ‘groupuscular’ form that many small fascist groups took after World War II, which contrasted with the larger and more structured types of fascist organisation that existed beforehand. To help explain this shift, Griffin introduced his readers to slime mould, a fungus-like phenomenon made up of single-cell organisms that can, if conditions allow, also behave as a multi-cell life form. As Griffin expanded, slime mould is ‘a slug-like entity that forms from countless single cells in ... conditions of extreme damp ... [t]hough it has no central nervous system, it has the mysterious property of forming a brainless, eyeless super-organism that somehow moves purposefully like a mollusc animated by a single consciousness’. He added that once ‘the conditions “dry

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out” and its habitat disappears the slime mould disintegrates back into the countless cells that composed it’.¹ This typically Griffinian conceptual metaphor helped him explain his position that fascism after 1945 had been able to adapt to new, much more hostile circumstances. Before 1945, the ‘habitat’ for fascism that existed in parts of Europe was one that allowed many fascist ‘cells’ to come together and form larger ‘organisms’, or slime mould to use the metaphor, such as the NSDAP in Germany. After 1945, the political and cultural ‘ecosystem’ for fascism became much more hostile, and so while they often tried, singular fascist ‘cells’ could not come together in such impactful ways. They remained fragmented and diffuse, but not without consequence or their own importance.

Griffin rightly added that this analogy from biology should not be taken too literally, especially given the propensity of fascists themselves to use organic metaphors to rationalise extremism. It was a mere heuristic device. With this in mind, this chapter will move from Griffin’s rudimentary lesson in biology to explore how the small-scale nature and lack of lasting unity common across most forms of fascism after 1945 should not be taken to mean that fascists have simply gone away. Griffin’s likening of fascism to slime mould is helpful in part because it helps take us away from seeing fascist ideology and culture as something limited to one epoch, sandwiched between two world wars, as suggested by theorists like Paxton and Mann. Following Griffin’s metaphor, we need to recognise there remains a habitat in Western modernity that is able to support a surprising variety of fascist ‘cells’. These usually remain small organisations, ones that have found ways to cling on to the edges of political and cultural life, waiting for a moment of crisis to claim their greater relevance once more.

To do this, what follows will focus on one particular strand of fascist activity, something my own work has explored in a variety of ways: the development of Anglophone neo-Nazi cultures. It will briefly examine some historical examples, such as Colin Jordan’s National Socialist Movement in Britain and George Lincoln Rockwell’s American Nazi Party. It will also look at their effort in the 1960s to create a neo-Nazi version of a communist international, the World Union of National Socialists (WUNS). To unpick the messy linkages found in groupuscular cultures, it will also discuss how these specifically neo-Nazi reference points, created by tiny, fragmented organisations making some effort to muster together their limited activities into a greater whole, have remained relevant to a

new generation of neo-Nazi activists. It will survey a number of contemporary neo-Nazi groups linked in a shared online culture. These include National Action, a British group proscribed under terrorism legislation in 2016, and Atomwaffen Division, a related neo-Nazi group in America whose activists have been linked to a number of murders. These and other related groups have networked using websites such as Iron March and Fascist Forge, and represent a modernisation of the groupuscular Anglo-American neo-Nazi cultures that developed in the 1960s.² Finally, it will reflect on how such neo-Nazi groupuscules help to foster lone actor terrorism, another product of groupuscular fascism.

Before examining these interrelated forms of neo-Nazi activism from the 1960s and the 2010s, to draw out Griffin's modelling, it is necessary to introduce a critical language that he has helped develop. In particular, it is important to unpack terms surrounding the groupuscular nature of post-1945 fascism and also fascism's cultic milieu.

'THE CULTIC MILIEU OF GROUPUSCULAR NEO-FASCISM'³

In his most recent book, Griffin used the above heading for a subsection of his chapter exploring the nature of marginalised fascisms after 1945. Here, he suggested that tens of thousands of tiny, largely ephemeral groups have emerged, each exhibiting fascist characteristics, since the end of World War II. While highly heterogeneous, these many and varied grouplets have shared a desire to purge contemporary society of decadence, fantasised about the rebirth of the nation or race, and dreamed of creating a new, supposedly healthy, organic connection to a re-rooted sense of existence. It is these qualities that allowed Griffin to call them fascist, though he stressed that how they develop their fascisms has varied enormously. Reflecting on the importance of the extreme milieu such groupuscules generate collectively, he added 'however ephemeral individually, they 'function as a dynamic, international "cultic milieu", which allows those who join one to feel part of an esoteric "order" and charged with a clandestine political task which can become like a sacred mission'.⁴

For Griffin, the terms 'groupuscule', for an individual node, and 'groupuscular', for the wider networks groupuscules collectively generate, were first used to study a small French organisation, the Groupe d'Union et de Défense (GDU). In an article from 1999 that identified the GDU as an important groupuscule, he explained that though tiny such fringe organisations were crucial to examine in their own right. Despite their

minuscule size, they could have a disproportionate effect. They were not simply stunted versions of old fascist parties, but rather represented a new form of adaption and embraced a decentred, information-driven organisational style that had adjusted to a world where fascist visions were far from acceptable within mainstream contexts. The collective role played by such groupuscules needed to be understood. Using another conceptual metaphor, he stressed they were akin to individual microchips on a computer circuit board; they could only function in a wider context of extreme activism; they were also, he therefore suggested, well adapted to the emerging Internet era.⁵

In a later article, part of a special issue of *Patterns of Prejudice* devoted to the concept, Griffin extended the discussion and explained that groupuscules are defined ideal typically as:

... small political (frequently meta-political, but never primarily party-political) entities formed to pursue palingenetic (i.e. revolutionary) ideological, organizational or activist ends with an ultimate goal of overcoming the decadence of the existing liberal democratic system.⁶

The article stressed groupuscules developed a fascist counter-culture, one driven to exist on the margins of Western societies as a form of adaption to environments that had become far more stable when compared to the climate of the interwar period. Phenomena such as the Christian Identity movement in America or the International Blood & Honour White Power music network typified these groupuscular dynamics. These were not single organisations but systems linking many groupuscules, held together through shared palingenetic visions. These were also movements with multiple nodal points, interconnected activities, and variations that epitomise a type of fascist adaption that eschewed the hierarchical organisational structures found in political parties.

In his original effort at theorisation, Griffin included the concept 'uncivil society', an idea theorised by Andreas Umland among others.⁷ This helped to point out the hidden spaces where fascist groupuscules could grow in modern democracies: the section of plural political and cultural space that allowed a 'dark matter' of anti-systemic political thinking to emerge, incubating neo-fascisms among other tendencies oppositional to liberal democracy. He also distinguished between 'monocratic' and 'polycratic' types of political movement. Monocratic movements were relatively cohesive and well led, while polycratic movements

lacked clear leadership and were made up of many diverse elements. For Griffin, the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP) itself was a good example of a monocratic movement, while the much wider and more ambiguous *Völkisch* movement in Germany before and after World War I was a good example of a polycratic movement. The NSDAP therefore grew from a polycratic movement into its own large-scale monocratic movement. The groupuscular milieu generated by the many smaller post-1945 fascist groupuscules was another polycratic movement, and implied here was that it had the potential to spawn new, larger groups too.

Griffin also drew on the work of poststructuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari to help explain his thinking, especially their distinction between 'arboreal' and 'rhizomic' organisational structures. Arboreal structures are akin to a tree and have a taproot, trunk, branches, and leaf canopy, and for Griffin, these resemble in a way the centralised, larger fascist mass political parties of the interwar period. These typically had a clear sense of divisional structure, internal and external culture, and even a discernable history with a discernable beginning, middle and end. He stressed that rhizomic structures were rather different. They are messy and tangled, like the roots of grass. While some fascist groups have maintained arboreal structures after 1945, more typically the rhizomic dynamics of post-1945 groupuscular fascism meant there was no clear singular organisation anymore. Fascism had become polycratic, centreless, leaderless, rhizomic, lacking in defined boundaries, and even a consistent culture.⁸ Moreover, though in some ways a sign of weakness, these qualities could also be seen as strengths.

Griffin's ideas were refined further since the early 2000s by others, including by Jeffrey Bale. Focusing on the adaption and transformation of French neo-fascist cultures, Bale suggests that groupuscules can be seen to act like four types of organisations, mass parties, as they seek to capture wider support; pressure groups, as they can try to lobby for changes; terrorist organisations, due to their clandestine nature; and armies, due to a focus on discipline and paramilitary training. Bale has also been careful to argue against using this language in an overly schematic and ahistorical way. Some groupuscules are short-lived, and even ones that become long-lasting tend to change significantly over time. The groupuscular milieu is always shifting, reforming, buffeted, and shaped by the dynamics of the world around it. Therefore, the groupuscular dynamics of the 1960s are going to be dramatically different from those of the 1990s,

or indeed the 2010s, the era of social media. To help avoid reducing the concept to fit abstract models, Bale stresses there is much work for historians to do in terms of plotting how groupuscular cultures change over time.⁹ Bale has also explained that the more advanced strategists within fascist groupuscules recognise their limitations, and understand how to use their small-scale structure to their advantage. For example, they use their limited organisations to develop small transnational networks, which act as conduits for spreading propaganda and ideological material. Like Griffin, he stresses that maintaining such fascist counter-cultures after 1945 was very different from the activities of even small fascist vanguard movements of the interwar period, which more straightforwardly aspired to become larger mass movements.¹⁰

Bonnie Burstow also picked up on the concept and used this to develop an analysis of the Heritage Front, a Canadian neo-fascist organisation. Her assessment drew out how the Heritage Front shifted from being a larger and more traditional type of organisation into a more decentred and leaderless one, typical of groupuscular neo-fascism. Her study was particularly useful for drawing out how groupuscularity gives fascist organisational structures strengths not found in more traditional types of organisational structure. Over time, the Heritage Front's retreat from a larger organisation focused on more impactful activities allowed the group to increase its focus on the flow of information and influence other groups. While retaining a core concern with promoting palingenetic white supremacist fantasies, she noted that followers could also believe in a wide range of incompatible ideas, from the anti-Christian ideals of the World Church of the Creator to the quasi-Christian worldview of the Christian Identity movement. This move to revel in the options made available through being a groupuscule gave it much greater ideological flexibility and an ability to outmanoeuvre opponents such as anti-fascists and the state.¹¹

Similarly, Fabien Virchow used the concept to assess the many neo-Nazi sympathising groups that formed the *freie Kameradschaften*, a German movement made up of a range of groupuscules. He focused on one, the Aktionsbüro Norddeutschland, and explained again that the rhizomic dynamics of groupuscularity came with distinct advantages for this polycratic neo-Nazi movement. He identified four advantages in particular. Firstly, autonomous cells within the network could appeal to a wide range of tastes, from those interested in philosophers such as Julius Evola to those drawn to White Power music. Secondly, various small groups could develop a culture that catered for different social classes and

ages. Thirdly, if a new area of interest emerged, the dynamic, rhizomic culture could quickly spawn a new organisation to cater for that demand, unlike large, more inflexibly arboreal organisations. Finally, as he pithily concluded ‘the fact that the movement consists of a great number of mostly small or even virtual groups with little or no formal hierarchy or rigid organizational matrix makes it practically unbannable’.¹²

The groupuscular concept has been used by many others too, including: Graham Macklin, who used it to explore the ideas and networks of Troy Southgate¹³; Kevin Coogan, for assessing the history of the European Liberation Front¹⁴; Mari-Liis Madisson and Andreas Ventsel, for examining the cultures of Estonian extreme right groups¹⁵; and Markus Mathyl, for studying the dynamics of Russian organisations such as the National-Bolshevik Party.¹⁶ In various ways, such studies have only served to reinforce the value of Griffin’s thinking, highlighting the diversity of tiny fascist groups who in one way or another have generated a wider impact through developing forms of groupuscular organisational dynamics.

As previously noted, Griffin also now writes of how groupuscular fascist networks are part of a cultic milieu. The cultic milieu concept was developed initially by Colin Campbell in 1972 and in more recent times has been used to help map the decentred, rhizomic, palingenetic counter-cultures of post-war and contemporary fascism. Like groupuscularity, the cultic milieu concept highlights radical yet marginalised cultures. For Campbell, the cultic milieu was a heterogeneous space, made up of new agers, radical conservationists, left- and right-wing campaigners, and many others. As such, the cultic milieu contained a wide range of radical philosophies, conspiracy theories, taboo ideas, and fundamentally alternate ways of thinking about the modern world, united through a shared oppositional quality to mainstream society. It was maintained through a wide range of publications, gatherings, and shared counter-cultural activity. For those drawn to the cultic milieu, the ideas found therein offered access to seemingly hidden, ‘higher’ truths, and so they could become driven by a sense of seekership and belief in something numinous guiding their journey.¹⁷

While Campbell himself has suggested the concept has lost its value since the 1970s, a range of academics has picked up the cultic milieu idea. Christopher Partridge, while not interested in fascism in particular, has built on the concept to argue that Western society has spawned a nebulous ‘occulture’, one that is deeply concerned with re-enchanting Western

life as well as rejecting mainstream values.¹⁸ Michael Barkun reflects the way the cultic milieu concept has been used to understand cultures based on conspiracy theories, and what wider society considers stigmatised knowledge.¹⁹ Fascism since 1945 epitomises stigmatised knowledge. Egil Asprem and Asbjørn Dyrendal highlight how conspiracy theories themselves often hold together alternate belief systems found in the cultic milieu, offering overarching explanatory narratives to smooth over the lack of empirical data to back up claims and assertions this type of culture generates.²⁰ Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Löw have championed the cultic milieu concept too, highlighting its value for analysing various white supremacist cultures.²¹ Graham Macklin has used it to explore the ideas of a British fascist think tank, the London Forum.²²

In various ways, then, we can use Griffin's development of the term cultic milieu to move beyond Campbell's original essay and conceptualise a fascist form of the cultic milieu. This fascist cultic milieu is related to a much wider cultic milieu made up of wider conspiracies, alternate systems of thought, and palingenetic ideals for transforming society, yet is focused on specifically fascist themes. Griffin also draws on figures such as George Mosse to stress that when studying fascism researchers need to deploy a degree of methodological empathy, to understand why the extremes of fascism appeal. The fascist cultic milieu concept builds on the notion of groupuscular fascism, highlighting its oppositional dynamics allows fascists to ground their appeal rejections of the mainstream, while presenting their polycratic movement as revelatory of another way of being and thinking.

By drawing on the conceptual language identified so far—such as groupuscular, rhizomic, polycratic movement, and cultic milieu—what follows will briefly draw on some aspects of my own research, which is indebted to Griffin's framework. It will draw out some highlights of Anglophone neo-Nazism from the end of World War II to the present day, as well as lone actor terrorism.

ARNOLD LEESE AND ANGLOPHONE NEO-NAZISM

One of the curious aspects of examining the groupuscular dynamics of the fascist cultic milieu is how so many seemingly incongruous connections proliferate, as disparate world collides when finding common ground in fascist themes. For example, in 1995, American readers of the obscure

magazine *Soldiers of the Cross*, a publication created by the Gospel of Christ Christian Church N.C.A., a Christian Identity organisation, could buy copies of another obscure publication, the book *Jewish Ritual Murder*, by Arnold Leese. First published in 1930s Britain by a tiny, Nazi-sympathising group called the Imperial Fascist League, led by Leese, this publication's presence in a 1990s Christian Identity magazine, on another continent, exemplifies the ways groupuscularity and the cultic milieu allow a polycratic movement to break down time and space as activists find a common cause. Leese's works continue to circulate on many Internet platforms today, and his ideas have been foundational for British neo-Nazism. With this in mind, it is perhaps less surprising that American white supremacists have also found his writings of great value, and there has been a sharing of ideas between Britain and America for generations.

Leese's antisemitic conspiracism from the 1920s to the 1950s was really only appreciated in its era by the small band of supposedly elite 'Jew wise' he tried to influence in Britain at this time.²³ While a minor activist before World War II, a period when British fascism was dominated by Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, Leese became a crucial figure for the establishment of British neo-Nazism. After being interned during World War II under Defence Regulation 18B, he helped to cultivate appreciation of Nazi racial theory and antisemitism among a new generation of activists, including Colin Jordan.²⁴ He was also an early figure writing Holocaust denial themes and wrote a book in 1945 called *The Jewish War of Survival*, which claimed Jewish people had actually won World War II. In the later 1940s, Leese published a new magazine full of antisemitic conspiracism, *Gothic Ripples*, to develop his ideas.

After Leese died in 1956, leading light of a new generation, Jordan, created a series of new, racist groupuscules, increasingly overt in their adherence to Nazi themes. One active at the end of the 1950s was called the White Defence League. Based in Notting Hill, London, it operated out of premises once owned by Leese. It tried to develop relevance by promoting deeply racist material demonising migrants of colour, including a newspaper called *Black and White News*. By 1962, Jordan had become connected to small transnational networks, such as the Northern European Ring, engaged in forms of neo-fascism. This network produced the magazine *The Northern European*, whose first edition celebrated Einar Åberg, an influential Swedish antisemitic publicist of the period.²⁵ Along with his friend John Tyndall—later leader of the British National Front

in the 1970s and the British National Party in the 1980s and 1990s—in 1962, Jordan founded an openly neo-Nazi organisation, launched on Hitler's birthday, called the National Socialist Movement (NSM). This group operated until 1968 and again represented part of the wider neo-Nazi cultic milieu that was developing in Europe, America, and elsewhere by this time. Typifying its groupuscular scale, the NSM had a membership base at best in the low hundreds in 1960s Britain, though was able to capture some press attention, especially as Jordan married Françoise Dior, niece of Christian Dior. In July 1962, the group sparked a riot, when anti-fascists and others attacked a rally in Trafalgar Square. Shortly afterwards, its leading activists were on trial for developing a paramilitary organisation, called Spearhead, in contravention of the 1936 Public Order Act. By the winter of 1962, Jordan and Tyndall were in prison.²⁶

Revealing their connections to a wider, polycratic network of activism, in the summer of 1962, Jordan helped arrange a transnational gathering of neo-Nazis and used this to found a new organisation linking together neo-Nazis globally. This camp in the English Cotswolds included Savitri Devi, whose writings combined Nazi ideas with Hindu mysticism, as explored by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke.²⁷ It also included the leader of the American Nazi Party (ANP), George Lincoln Rockwell. Like the NSM, the ANP was a tiny group that became expert at attracting attention. Frederick Simonelli explains this allowed its charismatic leader, George Lincoln Rockwell, 'to play a larger role in the public arena of his day than his small following ever justified'.²⁸ Jordan and Rockwell were the leading figures in a new network of neo-Nazi groups and individuals, the WUNS, founded at this gathering and that operated throughout the 1960s and beyond.

Rockwell subsequently wrote of his experiences at the Cotswolds gathering in his organisation's magazine *Stormtrooper*. He described the mood conjured by his fellow activists, especially Jordan, as crucial, helping create a mythic bond with Hitler himself that inspired their shared mission:

When I congratulated the British Nazis on reaching up to grasp the mighty hand of The Leader, I put my arm up into the darkness, and could almost feel the touch of the Great Man, and the surging power from an Inscrutable Destiny which has so far guided us unerringly through impossible circumstances to victory after victory!²⁹

In other words, for these neo-Nazis, such activism offered a chance to escape from mainstream reality and develop an oppositional fascist cultic milieu. The sense that the WUNS network offered a sense of the religious comes through in its materials too. For example, one of its programme leaflets explained that Hitler was ‘a gift of inscrutable Providence’ who tried to save the world from Jewish-Bolshevik influence, and that the ‘blazing spirit of this heroic man can give us the strength and inspiration to rise, like the early Christians ... to bring the world a new birth of radiant idealism’.³⁰ Hitler was a prophet in the new religion of Nazism.

The WUNS became another transnational, polycratic, rhizomic movement. Openly Nazi parties from Canada, Australia, and South America created lasting connections with its culture, while activists from Ireland, France, Germany, and Britain all engaged with the WUNS during its 1960s high point and continued to discuss its influence into the 1970s and beyond. The American Nazi Party dominated much of the activities of the WUNS, ensuring Rockwell himself became a figure with lasting recognition within international neo-Nazi cultures to this day. Rockwell’s departure from the picture came in 1967, when a former member of the ANP killed him, allowing him to be turned into a neo-Nazi martyr. Jordan meanwhile served further time in prison in 1967 and on his release in 1968 converted his NMS into the British Movement and tried for a time to gain electoral support for his political agenda. After losing such key figures, the WUNS fell into decline.³¹

At its height, the WUNS also acted as an incubator for new figures, such as William Pierce. As part of his duties, Pierce edited the network’s intellectual organ, *National Socialist World*. This journal epitomised the aspirations of these neo-Nazis to rethink what National Socialism meant for a new era, twenty years after the fall of the regime that inspired them. Pierce himself also went on to become a significant contributor to the neo-Nazi cultic milieu and groupuscular counter-culture. For example, by the end of the 1970s, he developed his own faith, aligned with Nazi racial principles and antisemitic conspiracism, called Cosmotheism.³² He also wrote, using the pseudonym Andrew MacDonald, one of the seminal texts of neo-Nazi fiction, *The Turner Diaries*, cited by many neo-Nazi terrorists as inspirational. While Colin Jordan’s British Movement ended in electoral failure, he remained active until the 2000s as a neo-Nazi writer and ideologue. Echoing his mentor, Leese, Jordan wrote an occasional magazine also called *Gothic Ripples*, where he promoted a wide range of international neo-Nazi and fascist groups, commented on the struggles

of Holocaust deniers such as Ernst Zündel, while also condemning the British National Party for becoming too concerned with gaining a small degree of electoral support, thereby selling out its core ideology. Jordan was in his element when he acted as a leader in the groupuscular neo-Nazi milieu.

From this brief sampling of some historical developments in British and American neo-Nazi groups, themes discussed earlier can be more clearly grounded in specific cases. The WUNS network is a good example of how fascists have operated through groupuscular, polycratic, rhizomic networks, linking together disparate groups across the globe. It helps draw out the point that while an individual tiny groupuscle is often not important, the ways groupuscles act together can become more significant. The examples cited also show how these cultures evoked notions of faith—the movement offered a belief system meaning full to its leaders such as Jordan and Pierce, if not always the wider circle of people drawn to such contexts. Finally, as noted at the start of this section, such groupuscular fascist culture can collapse together influences from different time periods; figures from one era can be influential to another.

CONTEMPORARY NEO-NAZISM AND GROUPUSCULARITY

Bale highlights that groupuscular fascist cultures are never static. They manifest a constantly shifting kaleidoscope of activity. Jordan, Rockwell, and others contributing to the WUNS in the 1960s operated in an age of paper-based magazines and postal letters, yet today neo-Nazi networks operate in online spaces. Chip Berlet highlights that Internet-savvy neo-Nazis such as Tom Metzger started using message boards powered by his Commodore 64 computer in the early 1980s, before Don Black created the most significant fascist online forum, Stormfront, in the mid-1990s.³³ Stormfront perhaps most fully exemplifies the complexities of online neo-Nazism, given its use across multiple languages, and for over 25 years. British neo-Nazis became attracted to online spaces from the late 1990s too.³⁴ However, other specialist hubs have also emerged more recently, including those dedicated to promoting neo-Nazi and fascist youth cultures. These too exhibit clearly rhizomic qualities.

One such site, Iron March, was active from 2011 until 2017. Its overt embrace of Nazi memories was clear from its banner, which read ‘GAS THE KIKES, RACE WAR NOW, 1488 BOOTS ON THE GROUND’.³⁵ It was run by a Russian activist, Alexander Slavros, and

during its period of activity, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, it connected activists from a range of organisations, including Serbian Action, Casa Pound in Italy, Golden Dawn in Greece, Skydas in Lithuania, and the Azov Battalion in Ukraine.³⁶ While this website is now defunct, others such as Fascist Forge have also fostered such exchanges. Links through shared Internet-based activism again highlight the transnationalism found in this polycratic neo-Nazi culture. This is not new to the Internet era, as demonstrated by the history of the WUNS. However, online spaces allow new, decentralised connections to develop very easily, eschewing older, arboreal organisational dynamics. One set of exchanges that help exemplify the wider trend is the way Iron March connected to two neo-Nazi youth groupuscules, National Action in Britain and Atomwaffen Division in America.

The first of these groupuscules to be founded, National Action, emerged as a splinter group from the BNP in 2013, at a time when the party was in the process of disintegrating following Nick Griffin's failure of leadership. Leading figures in National Action included Alex Davies and Benjamin Raymond, both young and educated. Highlighting the groupuscular dynamics feeding into National Action, the groupuscule also drew on another party Raymond was developing, the Integralist Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.³⁷ National Action's logo, a modified version of the Nazi *Sturmabteilung*, or SA, symbol, exemplified its open embrace of Nazi themes. Unlike the BNP, which moderated its public image to try and gain electoral respectability, National Action revelled in the taboo aspects of Nazi iconography. Its mission statement explained the organisation was dedicated to youth activism and was inspired not only by the National Socialist past but also by Greece's Golden Dawn.³⁸ Its early materials highlighted it sought to create a particular look to capture a youth following, explaining: 'Right now our name is to somehow become chic – we have a limited audience, but we want them to have something they can wear which ... makes them feel proud'.³⁹ It also described their movement as engaged in developing a new type of faith in extreme politics. A booklet called *Attack* explained 'we too must answer with our own political faith, exchanging a defence for the battle-cry of attack which will summon the best of our people. Out of the catharsis will come a new type of man', adding that it was time for 'general concepts moulded into a sharp political program, and generic nationalism into a political faith'.⁴⁰

Until December 2016, the organisation mounted a series of public demonstrations, uploaded much offensive material to YouTube, and engaged in online and offline antisemitic attacks, including in 2014, on the then Labour MP Luciana Berger. It developed regional units and had a total membership of around 100 people. Drawing on Bale's approach, it is notable that within this groupuscule, there were clear elements akin to an army, as it developed paramilitary training sessions and also a terrorist organisation. Indeed, it was proscribed under terrorism legislation in December 2016, the first time this measure had been used to stop an extreme right group in Britain.⁴¹ Former members have also been convicted under terrorism legislation, including Jack Renshaw, who plotted to kill another Labour MP, Rosie Cooper. We saw earlier that Virchow claims that groupuscular dynamics made it impossible to ban rhizomic forms of neo-Nazism. After proscription, 2017 saw a range of new groups emerge that continue forms of National Action's activism. These included Scottish Dawn and NS131, which were both also proscribed in 2017. Reinvention continued and yet another group, Sonnenkrieg Division, was created, largely active on social media sites such as Telegram. June 2019 saw two teenagers linked to this latest groupuscule, student and Polish national, Michal Szewczuk, and a labourer, Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski, convicted of encouraging terrorism. Eventually, this group was also proscribed under terrorism legislation, in February 2020. Banning National Action has stymied its activism, but it is impossible to fully discontinue those sympathetic to its underlying ideals.

Benjamin Raymond was also active on Iron March around the time National Action was founded, and he connected with neo-Nazi sympathisers internationally. Here, he encountered American activists who later developed another group that echoed and developed further the 'look' of National Action, and whose style in turn influenced Sonnenkrieg Division's materials. While distinct organisations, these groupuscules cultivated a shared culture, one that was also developed by groups such as Antipodean Resistance in Australia.⁴² Atomwaffen Division was formally launched in 2015, and their website described the groupuscule as a 'Revolutionary National Socialist organization centred around political activism and the practice of an autonomous Fascist lifestyle. As an ideological band of comrades, we perform both activism and militant training'.⁴³ Since this point, Atomwaffen Division has engaged in a range of activities, including offensive stickering campaigns at universities and other public places, running training camps for activists, and developing a wide range of online material. Five of its activists have also been linked to murders.

Atomwaffen Division activists and the wider youth neo-Nazi culture they have helped to foster have also become fascinated by America's neo-Nazi past. In particular, they have focused on the writings of a long-forgotten member of the American Nazi Party, James Mason. Since the 1960s, Mason has been something of a lone voice in US neo-Nazi circles, advocating terrorism and violence in a newsletter called *Seige*. This has now been converted into a book by Atomwaffen Division activists, disseminated online via a dedicated website, *Siege Culture*. As well as praise for Mason and new interviews with him by Atomwaffen figures, Rockwell was also venerated by this new generation. For example, editions of the ANP magazine *Stormtrooper* have also been scanned and uploaded to *Siege Culture*, alongside photos from the party's 1960s heyday and material from the WUNS. Rockwell's inspiration was explored in an essay by Mason, 'The Rockwell Century', which praised his drive for revolutionary change, adding: 'Legends aren't easily made and it is the true test of a genuine legend when – as it was and remains – that the lying, manipulating, opinion-forming and taste-making enemy media does its very damndest to see to it that the person is literally BURIED from the sight of the public, and still the legend not only lives on but grows'.⁴⁴ Texts on its 'Library' section epitomise taboo ideals and include Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Pierce's *The Turner Diaries*, and Jordan's fantasy of a fascist revolution *The Uprising*.

Finally, something even more overtly cultic, or rather occult, can be found within this context. Some activists within both Sonnenkrieg Division and Atomwaffen Division have taken interest in a satanic mythology called the Order of the Nine Angles. This esoteric mythology claims human history is broken into Aeons and looks towards a future point where the Western Aeon is over and a new time, Imperium, can start. Clearly, a variation of the palingenetic rebirth myth Griffin has based his theory of fascism on, the Order of the Nine Angles mythology argues adherents need to offer praise and idealise phenomena that seem most taboo and devilish to mainstream society. Therefore, alongside worship of Satan, this rationalises idealisation of Hitler and his worldview, alongside praise for a range of rapists and murderers, including James Manson. This is all bound together within the Order of the Nine Angles mythology through a set of rituals steeped in the occult.⁴⁵

From this brief survey of some of the contemporary aspects of the neo-Nazi polycratic movement, it is again clear this is a fascist sub-culture set across a range of groupuscules connected in rhizomic networks.

These have found new ways to connect and transfer information, using online spaces. Moreover, they have created new blends of neo-Nazi themes, drawing on idealised memories of National Socialist and neo-Nazi pasts, as well other esoteric elements such as Satanism. Some groupuscules, such as National Action, have also had to contend with new threats, such as proscription under terrorism legislation. This has certainly stymied activism, but has not prevented new groupuscules from emerging either. While such groupuscules are often demonised for promoting political violence, the ways such extremisms breed terrorism are important to reflect on in a survey of groupuscular fascism.

LONE ACTOR TERRORISM AND CONTEMPORARY FASCISM

Fascism today can certainly inspire terrorism. However, typically terroristic violence is not carried out by lead figures in the types of groups discussed above. Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* set out a fantasy of apocalypse leading to revolution, but Pierce did not carry out terrorism. His narrative idealising violence has inspired others, such as Timothy McVeigh though. Indeed, as Joel Busher, Graham Macklin, and Dominic Holbrooke have recently pointed out, in an important corrective to assumptions that groups that talk up violence also carry it out, extremist organisations that idealise terrorism often also develop 'internal breaks' on actually carrying out such violence.⁴⁶ However, they also generate a set of discourses that permeate the wider cultic milieu and rhizomic networks. In recent times, such messages urging violence have become disseminated across online spaces, fuelling lone actor terrorism. The emergence of the lone actor terrorist was something that Griffin discusses in his book *Terrorist Creed*, a study which helps develop a deeper appreciation of neo-fascist terrorism, from the Years of Lead in Italy to Anders Breivik. As Griffin stresses here, fascist cultures foster 'a radicalising medium which may turn the violent, but impotent rage ... into a commitment to an ideologically elaborated cause ... focused to the point of assuming the form of a specific "mission" to carry out an act of semiotically significant violence'.⁴⁷

In the 1980s, Tom Metzger promoted the idea of the 'lone wolf', as a way for individuals to carry out illegal, violent activity without this impacting on neo-Nazi organisations. The term is much used in the media, repeating Metzger's effort at a false distinction between neo-fascist culture and political violence. A far better way of conceptualising this phenomenon, recognising how they are intertwined, is through the

themes of groupuscularity and rhizomic fascism. Those who engage with a wider fascist milieu yet act alone are best described as lone actors; they act alone but relate their actions to a wider community who they feel supports their aims. They are activists whose lives are given meaning through their connectivity to wider fascist groupuscular networks; like neo-Nazi groupuscles, these lone figures are part of the contemporary polycratic fascist movement. Sometimes this entwinement takes a one-way form, where the lone actor terrorist simply engages with material found online. Breivik would be a good example here. His manifesto was comprised of articles by anti-Muslim bloggers like Fjordman.⁴⁸ Mattias Gardell explains in a seminal article on how Breivik conferred meaning onto his violence, and how the bespoke worldview he constructed was a type of fascism.⁴⁹ In other cases, the relationship between lone terrorist and wider neo-fascist cultures is two-way: lone actor terrorists start out being part of a larger group, yet become frustrated the group is not engaging in the violence idealised by the wider milieu, so the individual decides to take things into their own hands. The British activist David Copeland is a good example here. A member of the British National Party, and later also the Hampshire organiser for a 1990s group called the NSM, he ended up carrying out a terrorist attack by himself. He set three nail bombs in London in 1999, the third one killing three people and injuring over 150 more.

The academic literature on lone actor terrorism has clearly identified the ways ideology is used to give attacks a sense of meaning and purpose, or semiotic significance to use Griffin's term. It has also drawn out a range of other issues that help explain this phenomenon. For example, Ramon Spaaij discusses the way lone actors tend to personalise their ideologies, embedding their own grievances into their actions. David Copeland's targeting of both migrant communities demonised by British fascist groups, and a LGBTQ+ pub in his attack, speaks to this. He developed a deep-seated homophobia as a child, well before he became attracted to neo-Nazi culture in Britain, and later described his targeting of London's gay community as personal.⁵⁰ Serious analysis now tends to be dissuaded of easy arguments that explain away the role of ideology by suggesting all such attacks are the product of serious mental health problems. While many lone attackers have some mental health vulnerability, this never fully explains a turn to violence. Paul Gill has described mental health as a cause of a cause, often being a reason why attackers have time to plan and plot an attack. Gill also explains how long-term factors such as social isolation allow grievances to fester, which then becomes

triggered by short-term changes to people's lives, which can be equally un-ideological, such as moving house or losing a job.⁵¹ This combination of long-term isolation and short-term triggers, alongside engagement with an extreme ideology to help give explanation to who to blame and who to target, was the case with Thomas Mair, who in 2016 killed the British MP Jo Cox, at the height of the Brexit referendum. Mair suffered from depression and struggled to engage with society for years before his attack. He was unable to hold a job and spent large sections of his life alone. He subscribed to a wide range of neo-Nazi literature, especially from America. Magazines from William Pierce's National Alliance were a particular favourite.⁵² After his attack, he was also idealised by National Action, reflective of their shared relationship within a rhizomic neo-Nazi counter-culture.

The growth of the lone actor terrorist, radicalised through online engagement with neo-Nazi and other fascist materials, helps reveal how contemporary fascist cultures can have an all too real significance beyond clandestine groups and online chat rooms. Among other recent cases, Pavlo Lapshyn, Dylan Roof, Michael Wade Page, Brenton Tarrant, Stephan Balliet, and Tobias Rathjen can be seen as variants on this trend. Their victims and their families, and those of others targeted by fascist-inspired hate crimes and violence, should help remind us that contemporary fascism is certainly not inconsequential. Like Mair, these lone actors are also part of a polycratic movement, and their violent acts are forms of fascist terrorism. They have played their role in what Chip Berlet, among others, has identified as a type of 'scripted violence'. While leading figures from the polycratic movement present a set of broad ideals that promote violence yet refrain from engaging in violence itself, their words have power. They inspire others within the movement to make the leap and carry out attacks using their own initiative.⁵³

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has sought to explore the value of Griffin's idea of groupuscularity and the cultic milieu. It has picked up on the metaphor of fascism no longer being able to act as 'slime mould' after 1945, but has retained a small-scale presence as 'cells' operating on the fringes of wider society. It has plotted the history of some neo-Nazi groupuscules that have been able to foster a sense of rhizomic connectivity, such as those that emerged in Britain and America by the 1960s led by Colin Jordan and George

Lincoln Rockwell. While this 1960s generation of internationally minded neo-Nazis sought to develop transnational groupuscular activism through organisations such as the WUNS, and their activities influenced neo-Nazi cultures in Australia and Europe, over time they waned in significance. However, their ideals have been rekindled by new generations, and today, a fresh cohort of neo-Nazi groupuscles is reconfiguring elements of this neo-Nazi past. While these groups tend to talk of violence but not carry it out, it is those on the fringes of this milieu who become the lone actors that engage in neo-Nazi and neo-fascist terrorism. Lone attackers have their own grievances and worldviews, but they are also part of the wider groupuscular, rhizomic dynamics of modern-day fascism.

In his 2003 article setting out his theory of groupuscles and groupuscularity, Griffin hoped that in future it would become ‘part of academic common sense to treat at least some of the units of political extremism that compose it as well “worth mentioning”, no matter how tiny’. Hopefully, this chapter has helped make the case for this assertion. He also concluded that in future it would not be

too far-fetched to imagine that the presence of numerous extreme right-wing rhizomes preaching cacophonous creeds of cultural purity and primordial roots (whether racial, proto-European or Atlantean), or attacking the decadence of the existing global system and calling for a new order.

He added their combined presence would ‘act as a pervasive “dark matter” latent within the liberal-capitalist cosmos’, ensuring ‘the centre of gravity of western democracies stays firmly on the right, an invisible counterweight to visions of a shared humanity and social justice for all’.⁵⁴ Readers can decide for themselves to what extent the emergence of new online phenomena such as the alt-right and the successes of populist leaders mean we are now living in future Griffin predicted.

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From ‘Generic’ to ‘Real-Existing’ Fascism: Towards a New Transnational and Historical-Comparative Agenda in Fascism Studies

Constantin Iordachi

It has become a truism to state that the sharp debates over the nature of fascism are as old and contested as the phenomenon itself. Over the course of the last hundred years, politicians, historians, journalists, and the general public have debated the main features and impact of what is arguably the most radical political movement of the twentieth century, if not of human history, in its entirety. These debates have been fuelled by the elusive nature of fascism—geared, as it was, more towards action rather than towards establishing a coherent set of theoretical principles; by the multiple local garments employed by fascist movements in various countries, all boasting their national ‘originality’ or ‘specificity’; and by the extreme politicisation of the label ‘fascism’, which turned into an insult rather than a category of rigorous political classification. It would

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not be too much of an overstatement to argue that the debate over fascist has often degenerated into a dialogue of the deaf, in which the parties are unresponsive to the statement of the others. The stances taken in the debate thus tell more about the political vision of the participants rather than about the phenomenon they claimed to analyse: 'Tell me your definition of fascism' one might ask, 'in order to grasp your political orientation'.

The excessive politicisation of the field notwithstanding, it is undeniable that studies of fascism went a long way in the last hundred years, from the Stalinist vulgate of the 1930s to more sophisticated Marxist or Gramscian perspectives, novel social-democratic, liberal, or conservative views of the topic, an increasing synergy in research generally dubbed as the 'new consensus', and the current wave of comparative and transnational studies. This essay aims at assessing the current state and prospects of comparative fascism studies, by exploring some of the most productive avenues of transnational research but also pointing to some glaring gaps in the existing literature. In the first part of the essay, I detail my engagement with Roger Griffin's work and its impact on my own approach to fascism, with a focus on the concepts of charisma, palingenesis, and comparative methodology. In the second part, I challenge scholars of fascism to further reflect on the comparative and transnational foundations of fascism studies and on the interdisciplinary nature of existing approaches, underscoring the need to combine social and cultural history. In the end, in line with Griffin and other scholars of fascism, I plead for a new agenda of historical-comparative studies of fascism that is critical, transnational, and interdisciplinary.

TAKING FASCISM IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE SERIOUSLY

I first engaged systematically with Roger Griffin's work around 2002, while researching the history of Romania's Legion "Archangel Michael".¹ At the time, the historiography on the Legion was characterised by stagnation. On the one hand, part of the Romanian historiography remained anchored in the Marxist dogma that treated the Legion as a terrorist organisation without a real mass base and the fifth column of Nazi Germany in Romania.² On the other hand, after the collapse of the communist regime and the restoration of freedom of speech in December 1989, there emerged a revisionist discourse aimed at rehabilitating the Legion as a virtuous, patriotic, and anti-communist movement

of social justice and national emancipation, criminally suppressed under King Carol II, General Antonescu, and the communist regime. Gradually, a new wave of critically minded scholars exposed and deconstructed the new nationalist narrative aimed at rehabilitating the Legion, but without proposing a viable interpretative scheme that was in tune with the international research on fascism.³ Although there was a significant upsurge of historiographic and even public interest in the Legion's history, the new contributions were, at best, predominantly empirical in scope, aiming to illuminate certain aspects in the history of the Legion while refraining from defining its nature. The most convenient classificatory label used was that of "right-wing totalitarianism", which admitted the Legion's extremism but deliberately avoided placing it in the field of fascist studies.⁴

Foreign scholarship on the Legion was at a crossroads, as well. In the 1960s and 1970s, pioneering contributions by Eugen Weber, Zeev Barbu, and Nagy-Talavera, among others, set the topic on comparative foundations.⁵ However, due to the lack of access to archival funds in communist Romania, these studies were deprived of a solid empirical base. Novel and more informed perspectives came from the Spanish and German historiographical schools. Armin Heinen argued convincingly that the Legion was a fascist organisation,⁶ a point reiterated, few years later, by Francisco Veiga.⁷ Despite these pathbreaking contributions, in the Anglophone world, the Legion was still a kind of *terra incognita*, its history being treated mainly as an idiosyncratic 'curiosity'. Although, starting in the 1980s, some historians began to acknowledge the Legion's fascist features, they still hesitated to fully locate it within mainstream fascism. Stanley G. Payne, for example, argued that the Legion "is generally classified as fascist because it met the main criteria of any appropriate fascist typology, but it presented undeniably individual characteristics of its own".⁸ In a similar vein, sociologist Michael Mann confessed that "we find it difficult to make sense of its [the Legion's] antirationalism", as it was "preoccupied with personal moral reform".⁹ There was an imperious need for new, theoretically minded, but also empirically sound works on the Legion.

The double aim of my 2004 work entitled *Charisma, Politics and Violence* was to connect the study of the Legion to the recent English-language literature on fascism and to "re-locate the Legion within mainstream fascism", by showing that its ideology "was neither a hybrid of fascism and religion, nor an aberrant form of 'peripheral' fascism".¹⁰

Back then, one of my starting contentious points was Ernst Nolte's intriguing question: "How could a certain kind of subtle cultural critique have become a vital political factor in Romania, at the edge of Europe?"¹¹ His answer was that it was not fascism per se, but national peculiarities superficially dressed in contemporary European garments. I intended to revisit this question anew, from novel theoretical and methodological premises, by exploring the dynamics of radicalisation in Romania and the way it took a fascist direction, without falling into the trap of Orientalising the Legion as a Balkan 'mutation' or an Orthodox 'peculiarity'. In this context, Roger Griffin's *Nature of Fascism* offered an indispensable definition of fascism and a comparative scope for my case study. I found his perspective on generic fascism liberating for the Romanian and Eastern European historiography, in general, because it enabled students to approach fascism in a non-Marxist but also non-exculpatory key.

Another critical step in my comparative endeavour was to reassess the importance of studying fascism in East-Central Europe.¹² This endeavour was not motivated by the desire to add to the fascist gallery of bestiaries or to praise the region for its genuine fascism, but to enrich the academic discussion on fascism with new case studies and perspectives. My ultimate aim was to arrive at a new research agenda for studying fascism comparatively, based on a greater convergence between scholarly research traditions in Eastern and Western Europe. It is my conviction that regional explorations of fascism function as a laboratory for further methodological innovation and as a field of experimentation and interaction of scholars from various disciplines and national historiographic traditions. To facilitate this process, I have also authored an academic reader providing students with a resource book on the uses of the comparative method in fascism studies.¹³ Translated in Romanian and Turkish, the reader helped create further synergy in research across the region.

Overall, I felt that my attempt to integrate "more firmly" the Legion within the field of Anglophone comparative fascism studies drew additional attention to the heuristic usefulness of Griffin's framework for approaching fascism in non-Western regions. It was followed by a plethora of new studies that tried to explore further the history of fascism in East-Central Europe from the perspective of the emerging consensus in the Anglophone academic world about fascism. I am pleased to report that many of these works were written at the CEU, where I have had the chance to help establish a research focus on fascism.¹⁴ Roger Griffin assisted us in this endeavour, as well, with numerous public lectures, participations to conferences, and doctoral exams at the CEU and, more

recently, with a book donation on comparative fascism for the use of students and potential ComFas fellows. Our collaboration culminated in a common encyclopaedia chapter on the sociological trajectory of fascism in the twentieth century.¹⁵

Fascism, Palingenesis, and Charismatic Nationalism

My approach to fascism is interdisciplinary, with an emphasis on socio-cultural methodologies; integrative, clustering concepts that have been so far analysed separately, such as social palingenesis, messianic nationalism, charisma, totalitarianism and political religions¹⁶; and comparative and transnational, with a focus on the history of transfers and entanglements among fascist movements and regimes. Based on my empirical work on the history of fascism in East-Central Europe and on my theoretical engagement with the existing scholarship on the topic, I claim that

Fascism is a revolutionary political faith, a form of charismatic nationalism aimed at the salvation through redemption of the patriarchal national community in this world. Fascist salvation was understood as a fulfillment of the national character through a return to the mythical origins of the nation by means of the terrestrial action of the charismatic leader and the paramilitary movement he organized. This type of salvation could be achieved via a concerted set of actions at four inter-related levels— individual, collective, statal, and international. It entailed: 1) the rebirth and regeneration of the self through new forms of socialization based on a new ethical code of conduct meant to craft the new man, 2) the ethnic, racial or religious purification of the nation through the removal of the unwanted “others,” 3) the reorganization of the state along totalitarian and corporatist lines, and 4) the emancipation of the status of the respective people in international affairs through an apocalyptic battle against archenemies.

This ‘working definition’ owes much to the ‘new consensus’ on studying fascism, developed around Griffin’s pathbreaking work on fascism, his ideal-typical model, and his appeal to cluster concepts in fascist studies, but also to other seminal contributions.¹⁷ My ‘working definition’ differs from other definitions in the field in emphasis rather than in kind, namely in its claim that fascism is first and foremost a *salvific political faith*, a theology of liberation centred on the myth of salvation; in the importance assigned to the role played by the charismatic leader in bringing

‘salvation’ to the national community; and in its emphasis on the religious “technologies of the self” employed to create the new man, having at the forefront the idea of violent sacrifice.¹⁸

A key dimension of my approach was to explore the palingenetic core of what I called “the Legionary ideology of national salvation”, using as a starting point Griffin’s definition of fascism as “a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism”.¹⁹ The importance of palingenesis had been underscored by major historians working on Italian Fascism,²⁰ but the argument was still begging for additional proof from other case studies. I felt that, too often, historians working on other ‘varieties of fascism’ were quick to embrace the argument, but they did so implicitly rather than explicitly, without spelling out their proof.

In several publications on the topic, I pointed out to the palingenetic nature of the Legionary ideology, as illustrated by its core mobilising myth of national salvation or redemption through a process of fascist regeneration.²¹ Based on a thorough analysis of the discourses of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ion I. Moța, Mihail Polihroniade, Alexandru Cantacuzino, and other leading ideologues of the Legion—all saturated with the religious-like metaphors about the redemption and purification of the Romanian nation—I argued that the palingenetic impetus of rebirth through violent cleansing functioned as the Legion’s constitutive myth (*mythomoteur*).²² This core myth was meant to give the Legionary community, and by extension, the Romanian nation, its sense of purpose. In order to decode the central palingenetic dimension of the Legionary ideology, and more generally, of modern Romanian nationalism, my demonstration focused on the cult of the Archangel Michael, which is generally taken as one primary proof of the “movement’s Christian religious character”.²³ Surprisingly, although, in the last decades, Romanian historiography has paid special attention to the fundamental myths and symbols that marked the modern history of Romania,²⁴ these works have circumvented the role played by the cult of Archangel Michael, regarded as the Patron Saint of the Romanians, as the ‘elect nation’. I have shown that this myth was first developed by the multifaceted Romantic writer Ion Heliade Rădulescu (1802–1872), who linked the Archangel with the figure of the Wallachian Prince Michael the Brave (1595–1601), presented as a charismatic hero mandated by God to save the Romanian people and Christianity, as a whole, from decay. Following Heliade, this double cult of the Prince Michael the Brave and of his Patron Saint, Archangel Michael, became the *idée force* of the Romanian ideology of

national salvation. Together, the two cults encapsulated the palingenetic myth of the Romanians' rebirth. The main elements of this myth, which served as the core of an ideology of national salvation, were: the idea of messianic destiny of the Romanians; the codification of the ideal of national unity of the Principalities of Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania in the cult of Michael the Brave and of Archangel Michael; the idea of the regeneration of the Romanians through the liberation of the national territory and their political union in a single state; fears of degeneration through estrangement from the 'national authenticity'; and the cult of heroes and the leading role assigned to the army and the values of militarism in the regeneration of the nation.

To understand the complex genealogy of this palingenetic ideology of national salvation and its appropriation by the Legion, I have explored its multiple political reiterations in romantic, conservative, and monarchical versions. The main principles of this palingenetic ideology of "national redemption" were developed by Romantic Romanian writers in the second quarter of the nineteenth century on a teacher-disciple pedagogical filiation, from Gheorghe Lazăr (1779–1823) to Heliade, and Nicolae Bălcescu (1819–1852). On the eve of World War I, the Romantic palingenetic national ideology was reformulated in a conservative key through new practices of the sacralisation of politics, which united the Church, the School, and the Army under the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty. One of the most important catalysts of this doctrine was the conservative politician Nicolae Filipescu (1862–1916). Filipescu combined the main elements of Heliade's palingenetic nationalism—most importantly the cult of Michael the Brave and the Archangel Michael as symbols of divine predestination, and the army as a vehicle of regeneration and national unity—with conservative themes, such as monarchism, elitism, and the patriarchal organisation of society; and with modern political themes, such as the idea of regenerating the nation through the action of the youth, educated in the spirit of religious and military values, following the principles of progressive pedagogues transferred from England and France (*éducation nouvelle*). Filipescu also set the conservative discourse on new intellectual bases, represented by two 'prophets of the nation'—the Romantic poet Mihai Eminescu and the historian and politician Nicolae Iorga. These mutations have redefined the Romantic ideology of 'national salvation' in the spirit of messianic nationalism. To promote this programme, Filipescu founded a new Military School at the Dealu Monastery—which hosted the relics of Prince Michael the Brave. An innovative experiment of 'national education', the

new school combines political conservatism with religion and militarism. Inaugurated on June 4, 1912, during the Balkan wars (1912–1913), the school was meant to contribute to the national campaign of physical and mental preparation for war and to maintain alive the flame of messianic nationalism focused on the cult of Michael the Brave. Romania's participation in World War I against Austria-Hungary (1916–1918/1919) was placed under the symbolic aegis of Michael the Brave, the unifier, and his protector, Archangel Michael. On August 28, 1916, Ferdinand I presented Romania's entry into the war as a "holy duty" to walk on the way of "national regeneration", by "accomplishing for eternity what Michael the Brave achieved only for a moment: the union of the Romanians from both sides of the Carpathian Mountains". In post-war United Romania, the messianic doctrine elaborated in the pre-war period was extended at the level of the entire country. The double cult continued to serve as the foundation of practices of sacralising politics around the Monarchy, based on the triad Army—Church—School. The coronation of Ferdinand I and Maria, on October 15, 1922, as King and Queen of United Romania, in Alba Iulia, in a new Cathedral of the Coronation dedicated to Archangel Michael, symbolised the apotheosis of this palingenetic ideology of national salvation.

A former pupil of the Dealu Military School, Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu (1899–1938) was to appropriate and reinterpret the school's pedagogy and to channel it into an anti-establishment direction. I have shown that the main ideological features and forms of organisation of the Legion 'Archangel Michael', as spelled out by Zelea-Codreanu in the 1933 textbook *Cărticica Șefului de cuib* (The Nest Leader's Manual), continued the lines of the progressive education received at Dealu: see the cult of Michael the Brave and of Archangel Michael, linked with the ideas of national unity and predestination; the belief in the graduates making up a new national elite destined to salvage Romania that would inspire Codreanu to forge a new fascist elite; the sacralisation of politics in rites and rituals merging military, religious, and nationalist symbols; and the cult of the heroes as martyrs for the national cause. At the same time, I have also pointed out that Codreanu departed from the official ideology of the school in major respects, reinterpreting it in a manner that makes the Legion compatible with other interwar fascist movements. Firstly, the Legion was successful in appropriating the palingenetic myth of regeneration, claiming the custody of the cult of heroes, and presenting itself as the only "legitimate" continuator of the fight for national emancipation and

as a divine instrument of salvation and redemption. Secondly, the Legion amplified many themes that were only latently present in earlier theories of palingenesis, such as the emphasis on salvation through the expiations of sins, ideas of metempsychosis as a form of national solidarity, and mysticism based on a direct and unmediated communion with God through the vocation and actions of the charismatic leader and of the martyrs. Thirdly, the Legion had an anti-establishment, revolutionary character, evident in its charismatic nature, in its paramilitary organisation and its employment of violent means of political combat, in its totalitarian drive of full control over its members and over society, in general, and in the attempt to forge a new fascist elite to replace the country's old "degenerated" elite. The Legion promoted the implementation of a totalitarian project, advocating the replacement of a pluralist political system with a single-party dictatorship, the remodelling of the State on corporatist principles, and a patriarchal organisation of social and gender relations.

Fourthly, the Legion reinterpreted the palingenetic myth, adapting it to the specific historical context of interwar Romania and imbuing it with a renewed apocalyptic sense of urgency, based on the alleged danger of degeneration at the hand of the "Judeo-Bolshevik" conspiracy, which threatened, in the Legionary view, the very existence of the nation. It militated for the implementation of a policy of "purifying" the nation by removing the Jews from the territory of Romania, presented as agents of degradation. This feature highlights the two intrinsic and inseparable sides of the Legion's palingenetic project: the salvation of the nation was to take place not only by forging the 'new man and woman' modelled in the spirit of fascist values, but also by removing the "Unwanted Others", through an act of violent cleansing. The destructive side of the Legionary myth of regeneration was often hidden by its propaganda in favour of its so-called 'positive' values. This apologetic discourse was initiated by the Legionaries themselves. In 1980, Horia Sima sought to accredit the idea that the Legionary 'negations', such as "anti-communism, anti-Judaism, anti-politicianism, were but accidents in the historical development of the Legion" and that the Legionary ideology must be understood only in the light of the "positive and creative part of the Captain's thinking".²⁵ This selective and truncated presentation of the Legion's ideology was perpetuated in the post-communist period, the Legion being portrayed as a patriotic, peaceful, and virtuous organisation, unjustly martyred under successive dictatorial regimes. From this perspective, the Legionaries imprisoned under Antonescu and then during the communist regime are

being glorified as ‘martyrs’ of the national cause, and even as ‘prison saints’, without specifying that their political struggle was not carried out in the name of democratic values but in the service of another totalitarian ideology, fascism.

My research on the Legion thus provided a striking confirmation of the palingenetic core of fascism in a Christian Orthodox country in East-Central Europe; but it also showed the further creative potential of this argument for the field of comparative fascist studies. More specifically, my approach to fascism palingenesis differs from Griffin’s in several ways. First, while Griffin did not engage with the original discursive field of the concept of palingenesis, I locate the origins of the fascist palingenetic myth in time and space by linking it to pan-European Romantic theories of social palingenesis. These theories originated in the eighteenth century by the Swiss philosopher and researcher Charles Bonnet (1720–1793) in *La Palingénésie philosophique* (1769–1770), were continued by Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776–1847) in *Essais de palingénésie sociale* (1820) and were then perpetuated by numerous writers, especially in Italy and France, but also in Eastern Europe, Poland, and Romania. Palingenetic discourses of regeneration were inspired by the biblical tradition, in general, and the Catholic and Protestant dogmas, in particular. In the first half of the nineteenth century, palingenetic visions and ideas of universal salvation were combined with the idea of a special mission of the elect nation, leading to doctrines of national messianism. The evolution of messianic nationalism was studied mostly in Western Europe, in countries such as France and Italy, and only to a lesser extent in Eastern Europe, the most important case study being Russia and mostly Poland.²⁶ My research added the case study of the Principalities of Moldova and Walachia/modern Romania. Based on these filiations, I have argued that fascism inherited from Romantic thinkers a new conception of the “sacred” which can be documented by way of intellectual genealogies and affinities with theories of social palingenesis.

Second, and in close connection to the previous point, my approach differentiates between universal ideas of regeneration and more complex Romantic *palingenetic ideologies*, defined as mystical discourses on the regeneration of society. In constructing an ideal-typical analytical model of fascism, Griffin uses the term palingenesis in a metaphorical way, to refer to the myth of regeneration, defined as the ideological core of fascism. Yet, as shown above, palingenetic ideologies encompass not solely the idea

of regeneration, but also additional key components such as the dogma of the original sin, providentialism, and the idea of divine election, the idea of purification through expiation, and the myth of final resurrection.

Third, the main aim of my approach has been to integrate the charismatic dimension of fascism at the core of its ideal-type definition. To be sure, the issue of charismatic leadership has been tackled in major treatments of generic fascism, Griffin included.²⁷ Yet, in these works, charisma is often either relegated to an issue of political style or leader cult, or treated as a marginal feature rather than as a core characteristic of fascism. I argue that charisma should be reconceptualised as a claim on authority both legitimising and organising power. I also point out to the need to explore more thoroughly the social connotation of charismatic leadership. Although political scientists theorised charismatic communities as a distinct type of political communities, the links between charismatic claims and *national* communities and ideologies have remained unexplored. To account for the fascist doctrine of national salvation and its vision of the nation as a divinely inspired community, I put forward the concept of "charismatic nationalism", based on a merger between pretences to charismatic authority and national messianism. I define charismatic nationalism as a doctrine that regards the nation as an elect community of shared destiny living in a sacred homeland, which, based on a glorious past, claims a divine mission leading to salvation through sacrifice under the guidance of a charismatic leader. Charismatic nationalism merged the idea of the holy, elect community with that of the divine mission of the charismatic leader as a chosen prophet or saviour of the nation and applied them to political practice.

Overall, I believe that my approach emphasising the direct link between fascism, historical ideologies of social palingenesis, national messianism, and charisma does not constitute a simple addition to Griffin's seminal definition of fascism but sets the study of the ideological origins of fascism on new foundations, opening up novel research perspectives about the multiple filiations, ruptures, and continuities between fascism and the nineteenth-century political thought. To underscore this intricate relationship, scholars of fascism need to employ a long-term perspective and to explore not simply the rhetorical presence of the palingenetic myth in fascist speeches, but a broader matrix of thought, made up of related notions such as salvation and purification through the action of a charismatic leader, with each fascist movement blending religious-nationalist

themes in new political faiths of salvation. The issue of communalities and differences across these iterations has to be carefully approached, however, to differentiate between general and peculiar and to account for various forms of hybridisation with established religions. More research is also needed on elucidating the exact content, symbolism, implementation, and implications of the palingenetic myth of rebirth in the ideology and practice of various fascist movements and regimes.

FROM THE COMPARATIVE METHOD TO GLOBAL AND TRANSNATIONAL APPROACHES

This volume's excursion into the history of fascism studies and the overview of my own research endeavour occasions a reflection on the legacy and prospects of the comparative method in the field. Fascist movements have existed in almost all European countries in the interwar period and also in several non-European ones. The study of fascism is thus an exercise in comparative history. The comparative method can help researchers further clarify the profile and trajectory of individual case studies; enrich the explanatory model of the ideal type of fascism; add to the existing typology of fascism; and answer causal questions about the origins, global spread, and trajectory of varieties of fascism. Yet, although fascism studies are inherently comparative, it is not an overstatement to say that—at least until recently—the comparative method has never had its 'momentum'.²⁸ In view of the recent evolutions in the field, but also in historiography as a whole, there is an imperious need to continually revisit the comparative foundations of fascism studies, turning it into a flexible framework that can creatively integrate new approaches.

As is well known, comparative history is not based on a predetermined or ready-given method: the issue of comparison can be tackled from a multitude of theoretical and methodological perspectives. The first and most basic form of comparison, brought to prominence by Griffin's work, is that of testing a concise but well-rounded theoretical definition of 'generic fascism' on historical case studies. This act of comparison seems a necessary research precondition: arguably, no student of fascism can approach the topic without a working definition of what fascist is; otherwise, he/she would not be able to identify his/her own case study in order to study it. Such definitions should be neither an aim in itself nor the endpoint (unless, of course, for methodological purposes) but—as I will argue below—the starting point of research. While ideal-type definitions of fascism are indeed indispensable, numerous scholars, Griffin

included, voiced methodological cautions concerning the benefits but also the limits of ideal-type analytical models of fascism. We should always keep in mind that such a definition is an abstract analytical model. In other words, "generic fascism" does not exist in historical reality, only historical cases of fascism do. This means that while such models are indispensable in the first stages of research, they might prove of limited use, indeed hampering creativity in later stages of research. While working on concrete case studies, researchers have to overcome the reductionist logic of theoretical models and to capture the richness or even 'messiness' of the historical reality. Thus, if during the process of producing ideal types, historians need to sublimate reality in order to capture its essence into abstract ideal types, when working on real-existing case studies, they need to do the opposite, by emphasising hybridity and ambiguity rather than purity, genealogies rather than teleological outcomes; multiple causality rather than uni-factor theories; and contingencies and the role of personalities and the historical contexts rather than pre-determined path-dependencies. Historians thus need to provide the missing links between theory and empirical research, and to document peculiar forms of manifestations of the fascist ideology, movements, and regimes in various cases.

The second possible comparative method is what we might call classical comparative studies: the juxtaposition of fascist movements and regimes to see what they have in common and how they differ from each other. If used properly, this approach is beneficial, since it can lead to the establishment of a typology of fascist movements, as part of the broader taxonomy of political phenomena in Europe. The approach is not, however, without methodological traps. The emphasis on comparing case studies can lead to the reification of fascist movements in "national types", uplifting the most important ones at the level of 'national representativity'. This would obscure the plurality of fascist movements in various countries, marked by the concomitant existence of rival fascist projects in countries such as Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. Fascism can thus be a manifestation of the extremism of the 'titular' nation, an instrument of state-building for 'stateless nations', as the example of fascist movements in Ukraine, Croatia, or the region of Moravia shows; or an expression of minority nationalism, as illustrated by the Nazification of Sudeten Germans or Saxons in Transylvania. Methodologically, rigid national typologies might also lead to the reification of a 'static' essence of fascism, obscuring internal debates, contradictions, and changes over time. This can be utterly misleading, since, in historical reality, we deal

with actors, movements, and regimes in a state of flux and motion and with hybrid outcomes. Second, until recently, historical research tended to concentrate mostly on the ‘core cases’ of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, marginalising other cases as ‘peripheral’. There is an imperious need to “decentre” or “equalize” the field, as Roger Griffin argued,²⁹ by moving away from the predominant focus on Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, or on Western Europe, in general, and to underscore the existence of multiple laboratories of radicalisation in various countries, and their joint outcome.

Yet, fascist ideology, movements, and regimes should not only be compared to each other, but also related to conservative, authoritarian, or indeed para-fascist phenomena (on this issue, see Kallis and Costa Pinto in this volume). It should be noted, in this respect, that another side effect of the ideal-type approach to fascism is the tendency to treat the history of fascism in vacuum or isolation, by artificially separating it from the non-fascist radical right, to which it was intrinsically linked in practice, or from politics, in general. There is a need to further explore the multiple links between fascism and the larger “family of authoritarians” and to point out to various forms of ideological hybridisation and interactions at the grass-root level, made up by conflicts as well as by political cooperation and multilateral influence. By the same token, the comparison should be extended beyond that family of radicals, in order to place embed fascism in the existing political spectrum. Too often, we read monographs of fascist movements that say almost nothing about the sociopolitical context of the given country.

A third major comparative approach is focusing on the transfer of ideas, practices, and institutions among fascist intellectuals, movement, and regimes. This approach rests on the comparative method but goes beyond the issue of similarities or differences by exploring transfers across borders. Historians of fascist transfers explore, among other issues, the circulation of political ideas, models, institutions, and practices; of books or other intellectual, artistic, or visual artefacts; and of activists, diplomats, and experts among fascist movements, parties, and regimes. Such an approach shifts the emphasis from national cases to the issue of transnational exchanges and the role of mediators, e.g. those who made possible such transfers, as active interpreters of fascist ideas, forms, and models. A fourth approach, closely connected to the previous one, is that of transnationalism, under the form of either shared/entangled history or *histoire croisée*. This approach is particularly fruitful for fascist movements, parties,

or regimes that developed in close interaction and should be therefore studied together rather than separating (see the history of the Albanian Fascist Party, which is inseparable from the policy of Fascist Italy and the Italian Fascist Party). Although these two paradigms—history of transfers vs. shared history—differ in significant ways, they have the merit both of underscoring intellectual networks and political connections and of embedding them within the general context of interwar Europe. Scholars applying transnational approaches aim at going beyond a mechanical juxtaposition of national case studies, by looking at processes of cross-fertilisation, transfers, and adaptations among historical actors or phenomena. Since transnational initiatives and outcomes are not fully visible if one works in a national context, transnational approaches can function as an element of verification, allowing historians to identify international links or features in seemingly national forms. Historians are thus able to account for the emergence of transnational *spaces* of interaction and exchanges through innovative practices: as I tried to show elsewhere, the 1937 burial of the Legionary 'martyrs' Moța and Marin, killed in the Spanish Civil War, offers such an example: the journey of their coffins by railway from Spain to Romania via Nazi Germany occasioned a ritualistic affirmation of the transnational scope of the fascist palingenetic project in three countries, based on the political alliance of fascist revolutions working towards a New European Order.³⁰

As with the previous approaches, this approach has its methodological traps, too. First, not all aspects of fascism would lend themselves to a transnational analysis. Second, it would be a mistake to assume that fascism can only be studied as a transnational phenomenon and thus downplay local roots and traditions. Third, oftentimes, ideological transfers and entanglements were not spontaneous, grass-roots level initiatives but were part of a well-orchestrated propaganda of fascist regimes and reflected their geopolitical visions. There is thus a difference between exchanges prior to fascism assuming power in Italy in 1922 and in Germany in 1933, and those occurring afterwards. In particular, the rise of Nazi Germany to a position of hegemony in European politics changed the rules of the game within the fascist camp; the military control or direct occupation of neighbouring countries gave Nazis means of direct intervention in their internal affairs, shaping developments in accord to their political interests. A well-rounded study of fascism at the international level should take into account all these aspects and set of interactions.

Another contentious issue that has only been tangentially discussed to date is the global dimension of fascism. Although the most authoritative theoretical frameworks for studying fascism have a global scope (see works by Griffin, Payne, Paxton, Gentile, Mann), until recently, scholars of fascism have rarely scrutinised extra-European case studies.³¹ In addition, even when studies of fascism venture outside Europe, case studies are rarely integrated into an explicitly global framework. More recently, however, there has been a renewed interest in the history of fascism in the United States, Latin America (mostly Brazil—see António Costa Pinto’s essay in this volume), Japan, and India, to name but a few.³² There has also emerged a plethora of studies exploring the reciprocal interactions among European and non-European fascist movements and regimes. Some of these studies are still conceptualised in terms of core and periphery and see global fascism as an issue of dissemination and reception of European models, coming mostly from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Others, however, employ a genuinely comparative and global research perspective, paving the ground for novel approaches to fascism.

To conclude, I would underscore the fact that these comparative approaches are not mutually exclusive but complementary: they fulfil different functions and can answer different historical questions. Some fascist movements developed in relative isolation of the European context; others were simply an offspring of Italian Fascism and German National Socialism; yet others blended authoritarian with fascist characteristics. The work of historians is thus not trivial but central to the effort of understanding fascism: its study cannot stop at conceptual level but should document the history of “real” or “existing fascism” in order to validate or refute existing theories or typologies. To do so, historians have to be methodologically minded and sensitive to historical contexts and differences in order to account for the great variety of forms of manifestation of fascism.

COMFAS AND COMPARATIVE FASCISM STUDIES

Since this volume evaluates one hundred years of fascism studies and Roger Griffin’s pivotal role in inspiring new cutting-edge research, I wish to end with a reflection on the ways in which a field of studies might come to full academic maturity. Obviously, any evaluation criteria are bound to be partial and, to a certain extent, arbitrary. Generally, we might argue, however, that a research field is well established when it is animated by a

vibrant community of scholars in various countries, when the number of publications is high and displays a certain level of innovation and sophistication, when there are vivid academic debates, and when the field is institutionalised in degree programmes, specialised journals, and scholarly associations. We might safely say, a hundred years after the birth of fascism, that comparative fascism studies fill the mark on all these counts. As this overview tried to show, and as the entire volume illustrates, there are still gaps to be filled on a number of research avenues: there is an overreliance on single case studies, a conspicuous lack of gender balance in the scholarly body and of mainstream gender approaches to key issues connected to the fascist ideology and practices, and a lack of novel social approaches and of broad comparative collective projects, while global perspectives are rather rare. New interdisciplinary, gender-centred, and comparative cross-histories of fascist ideology, movements/parties, and regimes would further revolutionize the field by bridging the artificial gap in research between social and cultural history and by aligning it to cutting-edge research conducted in other branches of history and social sciences (for the existing cleavages between studies of the ideology vs. the 'praxeology' of fascism, see the chapter by Reichardt). In addition, although the literature on fascism is enormous, the field has been until recently under-institutionalised, in many ways, lacking specialised journals and learned associations. The reasons for this belated institutionalisation have to do with the excessive politicisation of the field, with political interdictions in Eastern Europe and sharp ideological cleavages among researchers, and with the East-West political divide. In this context, the establishment of the journal *Fascism* in 2012 and of *The International Association for Comparative Fascist Studies* (ComFas) in 2018 was meant to help boost comparative and transnational approaches and to connect social scientists from different parts of the world. It is our conviction that the study of fascism can function as a driving force of historiographical innovation, facilitating academic cross-fertilisation among multiple research fields and clustering interdisciplinary approaches pertaining to sociocultural history, gender, and transnational history, to name but a few.

Our transnational network now consists of a leading journal in the field, *Fascism*; a truly international learned association, ComFas; and, most importantly, a community of scholars who are experimenting with new approaches. We believe we have a window of opportunity to take the field to a new level of methodological sophistication, to renew its

research agenda, and to facilitate the initiation of cutting-edge collaborative projects. Our aim is not to promote a certain ready-made definition or approach to fascism, but to create synergy in research among various historiographical schools and traditions. To this end, the ComFas conventions have proposed themes that could help fill gaps in the existing research. The first convention (CEU Budapest, 2018) invited reflections on “Fascism and the Transnational Turn”; the second convention (Uppsala University, Uppsala, 2019) focused on fascism’s relation to violence, which was at the very heart of the fascist utopian vision of “renewal through cleansing”, while the third convention, that took place in September 2020 (CEU PU, Vienna), explored the intricate relationship between fascism and the radical right in both historical and contemporary perspectives.

Certainly, we do not want to overstretch the importance of fascism for today’s politics. On the contrary, our aim is to promote conceptual clarity in the field and to encourage historians, journalists, and the general public to use the concept of fascism sparingly and prudently. Today, few extremist parties, if at all, openly identify themselves with historical fascism, due to its failure in WWII and its political stigmatisation. It is undeniable, however, that fascism still has political relevance nowadays, not in the form of mass parties but in the form of either small but radical groupings or hybrid authoritarian or para-fascist political regimes that selectively embrace key fascist characteristics such as ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, racism, the demonisation of minorities, or the drive towards “regeneration thorough cleansing”. There is, increasingly, a feeling of *déjà vu* in politics today, which prompts us to revisit the lessons learned from interwar fascism and its assault on democracy.

NOTES

1. See Iordachi, Constantin. 2004. *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of “Archangel Michael” in Inter-War Romania*. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology. I was fortunate to have Griffin as one of the manuscript reviewers, thus directly benefiting from his feedback.
2. See Fătu, Mihai, and Ion Spălățelu. 1980. *Garda de Fier, organizație teroristă de tip fascist*. București: Editura Politică.
3. Petculescu, Constantin. 1997. *Mișcarea legionară: mit și realitate*. București: Noua Alternativă.

4. See Scurtu, Ion (coord.), Cristian Troncotă, Natalia Tampa, Dragoș Zamfirescu, and Ion Bucur, eds. 1996. *Totalitarismul de dreapta în România. Origini, manifestări, evoluție 1919–1927*. București: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului.
5. See Weber, Eugen. 1965. Romania. In Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right: A Historical Profile*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 501–574; 1966. The Man of the Archangel. *Journal of Contemporary History* 1: 101–126; Fisher-Galati, Stephen. 1971. Fascism in Romania. In Peter F. Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 112–122; Turczynski, Emanuel. 1971. The Background of Romanian Fascism. In Peter F. Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 101–111; Barbu, Zeev. 1968. Rumania. In S. J. Woolf, ed., *European Fascism*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 146–166; Barbu, Zeev, 1980. Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard, the Fascist Movement of Romania. In Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Jan Petter Myklebust, eds., *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget; Irvington-on-Hudson: Columbia University Press, 379–394; and Ioanid, Radu. 1990. *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania*. Boulder: East European Monographs. For a comparative view of fascism in Romania and Hungary, see Nagy-Talavera, Nicholas. 1967. *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania*. Berkeley: California University Press.
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7. Veiga, Francisco. 1989. *La Mística del Ultranacionalismo. Historia de la Guardia de Hierro. Rumania, 1919–1941*. Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
8. Payne, Stanley G. 1995. *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 280.
9. Mann, Michael. 2004. *Fascists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 271.
10. Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence*.
11. Nolte, Ernst. 1966. *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 462.
12. Iordachi, Constantin. 2010. Fascism in Interwar East Central and South-eastern Europe: Toward a New Transnational Research Agenda. *East Central Europe* 37, Nos. 2–3: 161–213; and Iordachi, Constantin, ed. 2010. Questions for Debate: Fascism in East Central and South-eastern Europe: Mainstream Fascism or 'Mutant' Phenomenon? *East Central Europe* 37, Nos. 2–3: 331–333 (Contributors: Philip Morgan,

- Roger Griffin, Andreas Umland, John-Paul Himka, Mark Biondich, Stein Ugelvik Larsen, and Armin Heinen, 334–371).
13. Iordachi, Constantin, ed., 2009. *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*. London: Routledge; Enlarged Rom, ed.: 2014. *Fascismul European, 1918–1945: Ideologie, Experimente Totalitare și Religii Politice*. Cluj: Institutului pentru Studiul Minorităților Naționale; and Turkish edition: 2014. *Karşılaştırmalı Faşizm Çalışmaları*. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
 14. For CEU projects on fascism, see (the regretted) Mihai Chioveanu, Valentin Săndulescu, Ionuț Biliuță, and Blasco Sciarrino on Romania; Áron Szele on Hungary; Marko Milosev on Serbia; Stevo Đurašković, Goran Miljan, and Lovro Kraj on Croatia/Yugoslavia; Debojit Thakur on India; Nick Warmuth on Nazi Germany, etc.
 15. Griffin, Roger, and Constantin Iordachi. 2018. Fascism. In William Outhwaite and Stephen Turner, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Political Sociology*, 2v. London, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 548–571.
 16. For an appeal to cluster concepts in fascist studies, see Griffin, Roger. 2005. Cloister or Cluster? The Implications of Emilio Gentile's Ecumenical Theory of Political Religion for the Study of Extremism. *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6, No. 1: 33–52.
 17. See mainly Mosse, George L. 1999. *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*. New York: Howard Fertig; Payne, A *History of Fascism, 1914–1945*; Gentile, Emilio. 1996. *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Eatwell, Roger. 1996. On Defining the 'Fascist Minimum': The Centrality of Ideology. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1, No. 3: 303–319; and Paxton, Robert O. 2004. *The Anatomy of Fascism*. London: Allen Lane; and Mann, *Fascists*.
 18. For an elaboration of this issue, see Iordachi, Constantin. Forthcoming 2021. *Martyrdom and National Purification: The Fascist Faith of the Legion "Archangel Michael" in Romania, 1927–1941*. London: Routledge.
 19. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, X.
 20. Gentile, Emilio. 1975. *Le origini dell'ideologia fascista (1918–1925)*. Roma: Laterza, 5; and Lazzari, G. 1984. Linguaggio, ideologia, politica culturale del fascismo. *Movimento Operaio e Socialista* 7, No. 1: 55.
 21. See Iordachi, Constantin. 2014. God's Chosen Warriors: Romantic Paligenesis, Militarism and Fascism in Modern Romania. In C. Iordachi, ed., *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 316–357; Constantin Iordachi. 2014. De la credința naționalistă la credința legionară. Palingenezie romantică, militarism și fascism în România modernă. In C. Iordachi, ed., *Fascismul European*, 328–394; and Constantin Iordachi. 2018. *Karizma, politika, erőszak: A fasiszta Vaszgárda Romániában, 1927–1941*. Budapest: L'Harmattan.

22. See Smith, Anthony. 1988. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 57; and Armstrong, John. 1982. *Nations Before Nationalism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 9, 128–167.
23. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution*, 37.
24. Boia, Lucian. 1997. *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*. București: Humanitas; Boia, Lucian, Monica Enache, and Valentina Iancu. 2012. *Mitul național: Contribuția artelor la definirea identității românești (1830–1930)*. București: Muzeul Național de Artă al României.
25. Sima, Horia. 1980. *Doctrina legionară*. Madrid: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 2.
26. Walicki, Andrzej. 1983. National Messianism and the Historical Controversies in the Polish Thought of 1831–1848. In Roland Sussex and J. C. Eade, eds., *Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe*. Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 128–142; and Walicki, Andrzej. 1982. *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
27. See Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, 6–8; Griffin, Roger, ed. 1995. *Fascism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 5; and Costa Pinto, António, Roger Eatwell, and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, eds. 2007. *Charisma and Fascism in Interwar Europe*. London, New York: Routledge.
28. The heydays of the comparative method in fascist studies were linked with historical sociology, animated by Juan Linz, and culminating in the work of Lacquer, Payne, Griffin, and Paxton, to name but a few. For a new wave of works on the topic, see selectively: Roberts, David D. 2018. *Fascist Interactions: Proposals for a New Approach to Fascism and Its Era, 1919–1945*. New York: Berghahn; Kott, Sandrine, and Kiran Klaus Patel. 2018. *Nazism Across Borders: The Social Policies of the Third Reich and Their Global Appeal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; and Bauerkämper, Arnd, and Grzegorz Rossolinski. 2019. *Fascism Without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation Between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*. New York: Berghahn Books. See also articles in *Fascism. Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*.
29. Griffin, Roger. 2015. Decentering Comparative Fascist Studies. *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 4, No. 2: 103–118.
30. Iordachi, Constantin. 2016. 'Romania, Espana, Latinidad, Cristo.' Cristianismo heroico y Martirio en el Fascismo Rumano. In Cobo Francisco Romero, Claudio Hernández Burgos, and Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco, eds., *Fascismo y modernismo: política y cultura en la Europa de entreguerras (1918–1945)*. Granada: Comares, 139–170.
31. For notable exceptions, see Larsen, Stein Ugelvik. 2001. *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse Against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism*. Boulder: Social Science Monographs; and Jacoby,

- T. 2016. Global Fascism: Geography, Timing, Support, and Strategy. *Journal of Global History* 11, No. 3: 451–472.
32. The literature on these case studies is large and cannot be reviewed here in extenso. On India, see selectively: Vanaik, Achin. 1994. Situating Threat of Hindu Nationalism: Problems with Fascist Paradigm. *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, No. 28: 1729–1748; Casolari, Marzia. 2011. *In the Shade of the Swastika. The Ambiguous Relationship Between Indian Nationalism and Nazi-Fascism*. Bologna: I Libri di Emil; Krishna, Chaitanya, ed. 2003. *Fascism in India: Faces, Fangs and Facts*. New Delhi: Manak Publications; Zachariah, Benjamin. 2014. A Voluntary Gleichschaltung? Indian Perspectives Towards a Non-Eurocentric Understanding of Fascism. *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* 5, No. 2: 63–100; and Banaji, Jairus, ed. 2016. *Fascism: Essays on Europe and India*. New Delhi: Three Essays Collective.

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